

Himalayan Times

special issue * August 2009 * Rs. 20.00

6th
anniversary
issue



C		Monila De's lifelong association with Kalimpong makes her a gold-mine of information on the town. Is acknowledged as one of the best English writers in the region.
O		Dr. Dick B. Dewan a former teacher of St. George's School, Pedong is now the Head of a B.Ed College in Gangtok. Has written the highly informative book, <i>Education in the Darjeeling Hills</i>
N		Dr. Sonam B. Wangyal is acknowledged as the authority on the history of the Sikkim, Darjeeling & Butan region. Has written two highly informative books on the region.
T		Nayan Subba of Darjeeling is a prolific writer with his articles appearing in all major English publications of the region.
R		Viral Khawas originally from Suruk in Kalimpong is now with the Sikkim Central University. He already has written several many papers and books despite his young age.
I		Wg. Cdr. Praful Rao (retd) was a President's Medal recipient during his Airforce days. Is the founder of the 'Save the Hills' which is spearheading the movement to bring awareness about Landslides in the region.
B		Anmol Prasad, a Senior Advocate with the Sikkim High Court, is also one of the leading English Writers in the Eastern Himalayas. Was previously associated with The Himal magazine, Flatfile and several other publications.
U		Bhanu Baral is the Headmaster of Kumudini Homes School of Kalimpong and had been a regular contributor to various journals and magazines of the region.

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Sandip C. Jain

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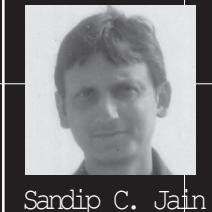
Editorial

Time flies is what they say.... Seems it really does for had it not then I would not have felt that Himalayan Times was reborn just a few months back rather than six long years back. More than seventy issues have hit the stands since that summer day in 2003 when the first issue of the magazine made its appearance. Some called and still call it a rag-sheet not worth even the paper and printing ink it wastes while there are some who have embraced it's their own. But one thing is sure- whether Kalimpong like what we publish or not the fact is that none can ignore it for the simple fact that it is the voice of Kalimpong. From the first issue to the current one the Himalayan Times team has endeavoured sincerely to fill up the void that the earlier edition of the Himalayan Times (for the mid 1940's till the early 1960's) and the Himalayan Observer (in the 1980's) had left. We have also tried to resist all temptations in trying to keep this magazine as Kalimpong centric as possible. I remember writing in one of the earliest issues of this magazine we would probably not cover or write about even a nuclear blast in Siliguri or Kolkata or Gangtok as long as its fumes do not affect Kalimpong. We have tried to maintain this editorial policy till date.

Of course much water has flown under the Teesta bridge between Issue No.1 and this one and Himalayan Times too has tried to keep pace with it- from being an eight page, single colour, shoddily laid, poorly edited magazine(if you could actually call it a magazine) it is now a thirty page periodical with can boast as having some of the topmost writers in the region (the pictures besides this column will testify to this fact) now on our panel of contributors. The journey has been an interesting one and of course not without its share of controversies and dangers from being the first English magazine from the Darjeeling Hills after the turbulent and violent days of the 1986-1988 Gorkhaland movement. The bodily danger was quite expected as Himalayan Times never shied away from writing the truth and on issue which no one else dared to write about, even at a time when that political party was in power which had to its credit the decapitation of a journalist right here in Kalimpong.

Himalayan Times and its team has survived, well at least till now, and its all because of the unconditional and unstinting support and well wishes the readers of this magazine have showered on it. We needed to thank all our readers for it and this special issue is our way of doing it.

We hope you will enjoy this collection of the very best of articles that have been published in this magazine since the inaugural issue.



Sandip C. Jain

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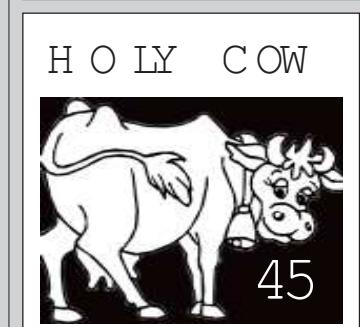
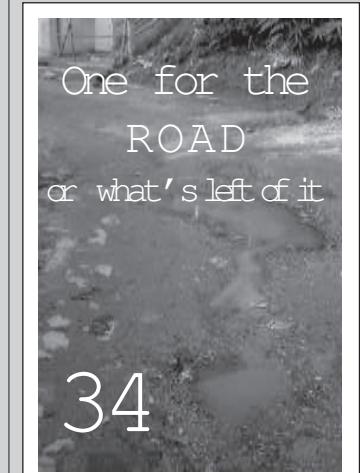
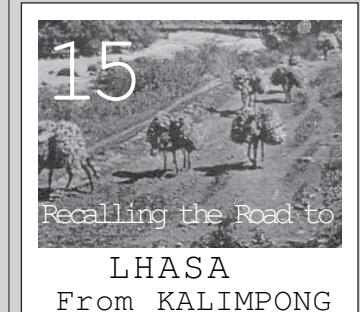
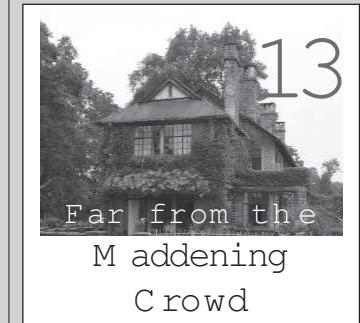
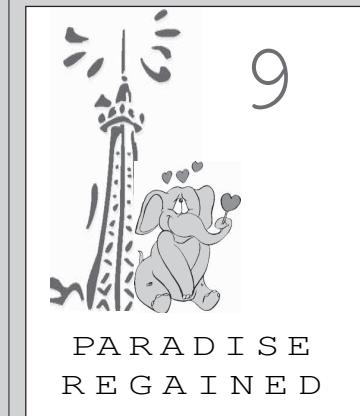
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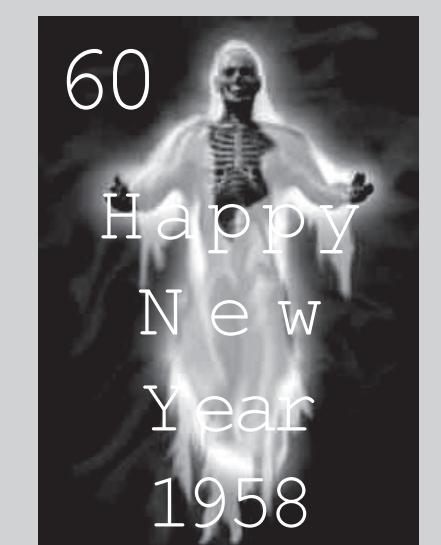
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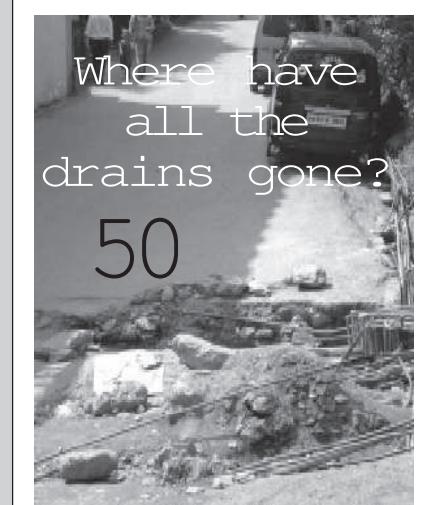


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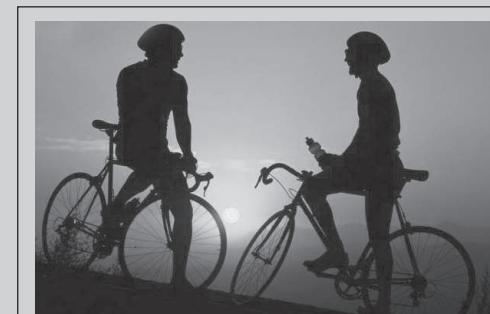


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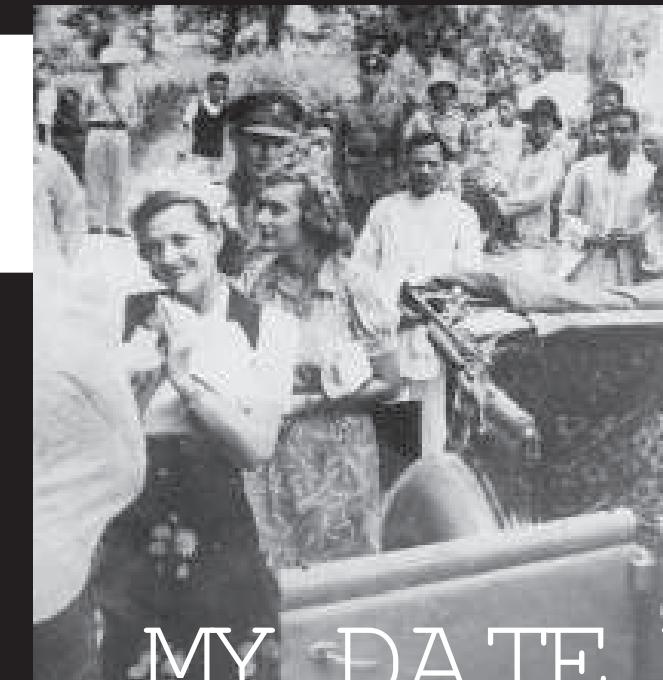
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Uncountable are the stars in the sky and so are memories is an old proverb and they surely became uncountable especially if one has lived eighty long and exciting years in this world like I have done. But then there are certain memories which stick to the mind and remain embedded in some remote corner of the brain however old the memory may be. They remain as fresh as dew even if asked to dig them out after nearly sixty years like the memories of this particular incident of my life which took place exactly 57 years back.

It was the summer of 1947, just after the country earned Independence. I remember the month being August but the exact dates eludes recollection. It was a big day for Kalimpong for the simple fact that Lady Mountbatten was visiting Kalimpong for the very first time. This visit of the Lady was of the time when Kalimpong was still in its infancy- when even a present day necessity like a car was a novelty, when petrol was priced at Rs 1& 13 annas (Rs 1/81) per gallon (5lits) and when the hire (reserve) charges for a car to Siliguri was only Rs.32.00. Infact there must have been just about fifteen cars in the town. I recall one belonging to Mr. Omkarmul Mintri and a few others belonging to Mr. Bansilal, Mr. Kashiram Periwal & Mr. Tashi Pemba Hishey. One belonged to my family too and this is how I was involved in this story.

My car, or 1935 Ford V8 Tourer model, (No DJPC 405) was to be a part of the convey carrying Lady Mountbatten and her daughter and so I along with Mr. Omkarmul Mintri, Mr. Yata Tshering and the driver of another car, Jagannath Parsad, reached Bagdogra on the day of her arrival. Bagdogra at that time was not what it is today- infact it could hardly pass off as an Airport. There was waist high grass growing on either side of the runway and a few huts in the name of a terminus. A young Bengali boy, with a black & white chequered flag, was the only person there who would direct the place to its spot on the runway.

The plane carrying Lady Mountbatten and her daughter, landed right on time which was 12.30 in the afternoon and as planned earlier- the newer and sleeker of the cars in the convoy, drove up to the plane so that the VIP guest could enjoy her drive to Kalimpong in one of them. My car was almost at the end of the line and I was expecting some "chaprasi" or low level of ficer accompanying the Lady to use my car. So you can imagine my surprise and shock when, out of the blues, the ADC to the Lady beckoned me to drive my car to the head of the convoy. I could hardly believe what was happening for my car was definitely no comparison to the many others present for her reception. While still numb due to the initial shock, the ADC produced a small union Jack (Flag of Great Britain) from his hand bag and asked me to put it on my car. Now my car, being the old lady it was, did not even have a flag stand so I hurriedly rigged up a flag stand with a small thin steel rod and some wire that I managed to find in my tool box. This done the elegant presence of the lady and her daughter filled my car.



MY DATE WITH LADY MOUNTBATTEN

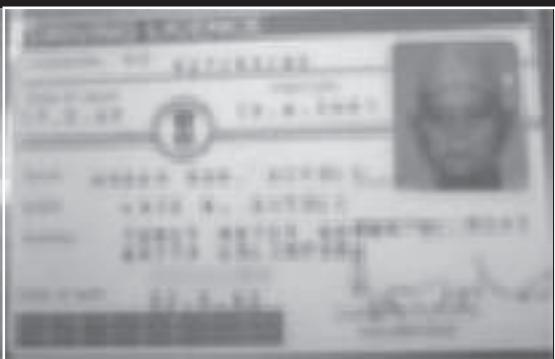
HARKA BAHADUR DIALI

MY DATE WITH LADY MOUNTBATTEN

HARKA BAHADUR DIYALI



This story was narrated in Nepali by Harka Bahadur Diyali. Translated and written by Sandip C. Jain



We drove non stop from the airport to Chitray with the Pilot Car in lead and several others cars behind us. At Chitray a short break was taken where Tea & Snacks had been arranged. We then drove directly to Dr. Grahams Homes where an elaborate welcome reception had been organized for her. The day finally ended with me leaving her at Morgan House where she was to stay. Before I could call it a day, the S.P. Darjeeling who was in charge of her security asked me to be on duty the next morning.

After a almost fully sleepless night due to excitement of having driven Lady Mountbatten herself, I reach Morgan House earlier than required the next day and

when she was ready to move we drove to the Industrial School and some other places before coming to Town Hall where she met David Bauni, a prominent personality of the town. The official welcome programme was held for her in the Town Hall. It was at Town Hall, that the picture accompanying this article, was taken. Her day ended once again at Morgan House and I was told to be present early in the morning to drive the Lady to Sikkim. She was going there on the invitation of the late Chogyel of Sikkim.

We started for Sikkim early the next day. The day was clear and my special passengers asked me to roll down the hood of my car. They rode the open hooded car enjoying the beautiful landscape. When we neared Tarkhola it started to drizzle a little and so I offered to stop the car and pull up the hood

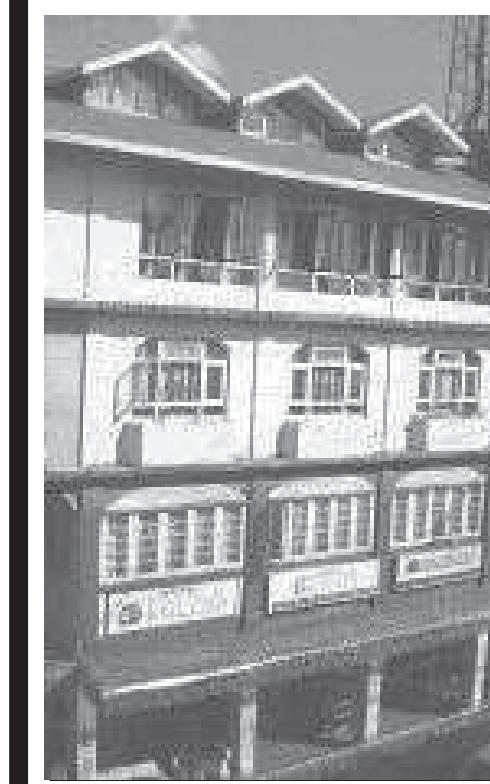
but Lady Mountbatten refused saying that she was enjoying the rain the fresh air and the sight of the lush green valley. Instead the mother and daughter opened up their umbrellas and asked me to continue driving. We reached Rungpu at about 10.30 AM and went straight to the Dak Bungalow, where the Chogyel himself was waiting to receive her. After the reception there it was time to move again towards Gangtok. But this time I was told by the ADC that the Lady would be riding in Chogyel Saheb's car and that I was to leave my car at Rungpu and travel to Gangtok in one of the others cars. I was assured by officers that my car

would be taken care of and that I need not worry for it.

Here I want to relate a particular incident that took place. Before the Lady could board the Chogyel's car - the ADC went to the car but refused to let the Lady into the car - the reason for this was that the Chogyel's car had the flag of Sikkim flying on its flag post. The ADC

asked me to fetch the flag that was on my car and put it on the Chogyel's car. Only after this was done that Lady Mountbatten entered the car. How particular the British were and how patriotic they were could be gauged from this incident. We spent three joyous days in Sikkim and good arrangement were made for us. We finally returned to Rungpu, changed cars and reached Kalimpong late in the evening.

The next day was my last encounter with Lady Mountbatten. I drove her down to the Teesta Bridge where a large reception party from Darjeeling was waiting for her. I was asked to stop bang in the middle of the bridge and here she was to get off my vehicle and continue her journey in the vehicle from Darjeeling. But the genuine, considerate and dignified lady that she was, she first shook hands with me, thank me and complimented me for the good driving and asked me if I needed anything. I actually did not understand completely what she was asking me for at that time I knew very little English. But she once again asked me by action of her hands if I required anything. I requested her for a certificate which was duly sent for me. But the sad part of the entire story is I could never even lay my eyes on this certificate. It was sent to Mr. Onkarmul Mintri to be forwarded to me but for reasons best known to him, he rather than giving it to me, framed it and hung it on the wall of his office. This is rightfully mine and would have been my most valuable possession and after me my children's and grandchildren's, had it been in my house. I hope that now that this story is told, Mr. Onkarmul Mintri's family would restore back to me what is rightfully mine.



COMFORTABLE
&
COSY ROOMS
IN THE HEART
OF THE TOWN



LOVELY VIEW
OF THE
SURROUNDING
HILLS FROM
THE ROOMS



VEGETARIAN
RESTAURANT
SERVING INDIAN
& CONTINENTAL
DISHES

Serving you our pleasure
Your satisfaction our treasure

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Paradise Regained

Monila De

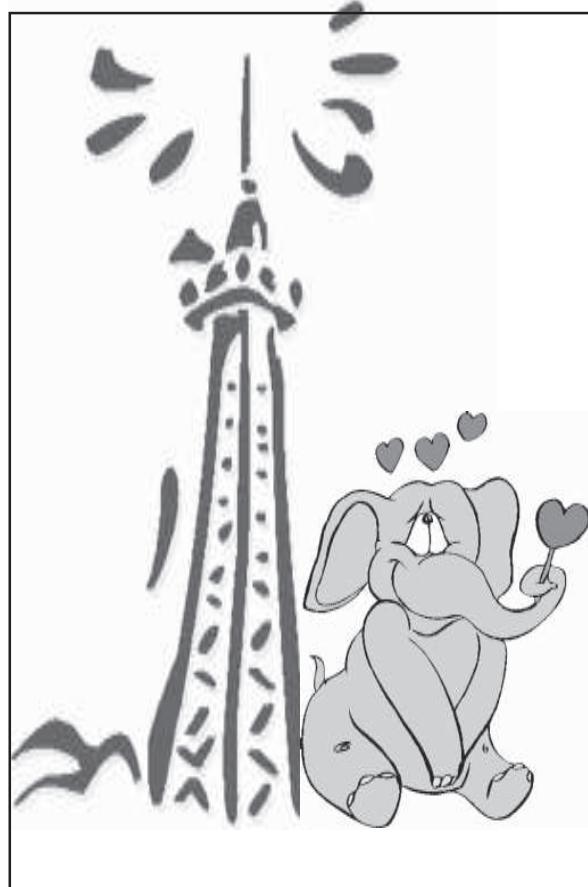
People who come to visit Kalimpong for a short holiday are enchanted by it. They tell me, "You are so lucky to be living in paradise," I happily agree.

The word paradise the dictionary say, is - "The abode, intermediate or final, of the blessed dead." How very appropriate. Kalimpong indeed is the abode of the blessed dead. The dead have no use for the necessities of daily life. We are indeed the blessed dead, we live without water, electricity, telephone, proper roads, street lights, postal system, conservancy, cable and a host of every day necessities of daily life. Necessities which are taken for granted in all civilized towns and cities are non-existent here, most of the time.

The electricity goes off with punctilious regularity in the middle of a party, a most exciting murder story, a nail-biting tennis match, children's exams and when I put a cake in the oven. The electricity lords wait and watch for the most opportune moment to switch it off and rejoice with ghoulish glee as people gnash their teeth in frustration.

The standard excuse for such disruption being a fallen tree, in the driest weather. Repairs. The most hilarious and far fetched one was about, the poor wild elephant who managed to bring down a solid steel pylon, while scratching its back against it! Surprisingly, both the pylon and reams of high-tension wires disappeared without a trace. Did the smart elephant, casually roll up tones of precious wire, sling it on its back and strolled off to provide electricity to his whole herd????

Sometimes, there is no electricity for days and sporadic on others. Outside the town area, no meter reading is ever done. Bills come regularly on average consumption basis. Then one fine day a massive bill is presented without explanation or recourse.



Every time the funds are low the lords of the billing department go on a spree of adding up figures, real or imaginary, with all kinds of extra additions to prove their worth.

Electricity theft is rampant. From the highest to the lowest of individuals indulge themselves with free electricity but do the pampered lords ever have the time and energy to carry out checks? The lord of the telephones is not the one who sits in his impregnably protected office. His lordship is the linesman. He is the lord and master who decided who should have the privilege of a live telephone line and for how long. This, of course, depends not on his whim but how well his lordship is treated by the owner of dead telephone.

A telephone can lie dead for days, weeks and months while the complaint book fills up with repeated entries. In desperation, you make foray in to the impregnable fort of the man at the desk. You will be lucky if he is there. His defensive mechanism is

simple. He will tell you with a look of surprise, that you are indeed a very unlucky individual that your phone is dead, when everybody else's is working.

Heavy duty, tamper proof telephone lines were laid not too long ago beside every main road in Kalimpong, so people could have direct underground connections. They still lie dead and buried. Recently, new lines were strung up above ground on poles, for the very same purpose, at a colossal expense again. They too lie high above, in loops and whorls not connected, while the same old flimsy wires, dangling precariously on trees, bushes, bamboo groves and wire fencing, carry on valiantly to bring our messages... If the lord and master does not tamper with them instead of the clever elephant....

Something more sinister goes on the impregnable fort. That is why it is a protected place. Here the lords of the computers play, computer games to locate unpaid bills. Bingo, they arass

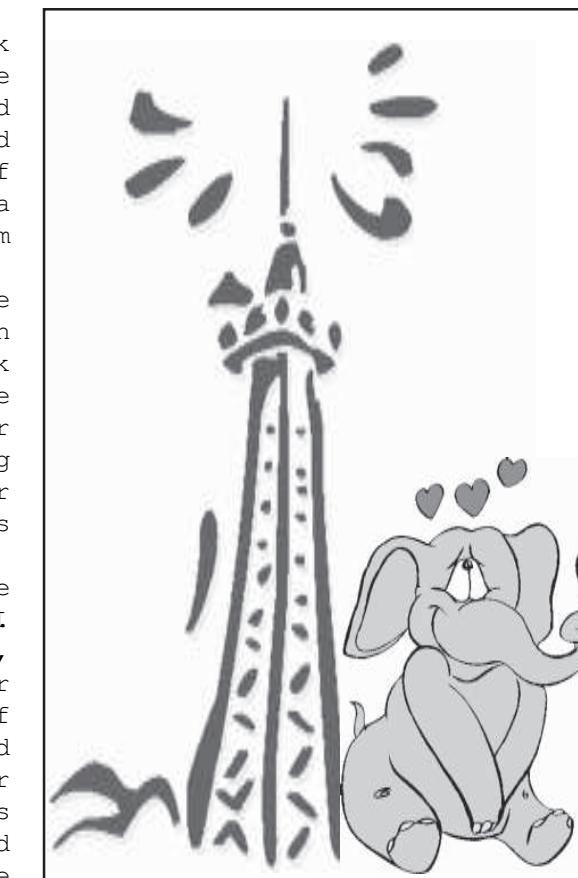
huge number of points as they go back ten years and find that every telephone owner in Kalimpong has not paid several bills. This amount could easily pay for a whole herd of elephants who are endowed with a low frequency communication system sans wires. An ideal substitute.

Who needs water? Surely not the dead. Even the water gods have given up on Kalimpong. They bring black clouds laden with water. Since there are no more trees and forests to hinder them, they fly over Kalimpong straight to Sikkim and unload their precious cargo there. Greed has claimed the trees, not the elephants. The British had provided every house with water connections once. The GI pipes, provided by the water works, were laid 3 feet underground. A water meter recorded the correct amount of water consumed and billed accordingly. There was enough water for everybody. Those were the days of the living. Now they are all dead so who needs water? They are cracked and crumbling, not because of the living. Now they are all dead so why needs water? They are cracked and crumbling, not because the elephant family held a vigorous party inside them.

Whatever little water comes down from Delo, gets lost in the market area and some of it manages to reach the tank at the park. From this VIPs get their quotas, what happens to the rest?

The almighty Fitter (plumber) is more powerful and ingenious than Lord Shiva from whose top knot sprouts the mighty river Ganga. Lord Shiva has no means of directing or controlling the water while the Fitter has. He not only controls but diverts it at will to the highest bidder. He has to be appeased every day, preferably in kind with bottled water. The old network of G.I pipes was laid by the British. The main lines which were laid above ground, in later years all died a natural death with no water to carry. They have all been dug up methodically from their graves and disappeared. The most capable for his job is the elephant; did he dig them up and take them to provide water for his family???

Those desperate individuals who have given up on the rain Gods and the Kalimpong water supply, have resorted to



bringing water from miles away via polythene pipes which hang on trees and fencing along with strands of telephone wires and T.V. Cables. They have to employ a full time guard to check on pilferage of water. The water lords, drawing a full pension, spend a couple of hours in the office. No water, no work. To amuse themselves, they go through age old files and discover names and water connection numbers, of people who have left this paradise and gone to heaven. Records of connections that don't exist anymore and with great enthusiasm, send hilariously exorbitant bills to them by post. The bills are still made out in terms of thousands of gallons. Inspite of Kalimpong's height, such massive quantities of water would surely inundate the whole of Kalimpong. Even a whole herd of elephants would be able to swim in it.

This amusing game entails reams of paper and postage. The receiver finds it even more amusing and promptly makes better use of the paper.

Who needs roads? The dead can fly over potholes larger than lakes in total darkness. The black, smooth shining roads with lamp posts have fallen prey, not to a stampeding herd of elephants but to the growing number of cars, hurtling over them incessantly. Wear and tear, blocked drains with weeds, mud and water pipes turn them into fast flowing rivers on slopes and leaves hug craters full of muddy water on flat ground. The 'Haat', becomes an Olympic size swimming pool during monsoons. They pathetically call for repairs.

The lords of the municipality are busy collecting taxes and imposing new ones to fill their ever empty coffers. Services such as conservancy only exist in the town area and street lighting conveniently forgotten for ever although we still pay for it.

Roads are never repaired fully, only patched up temporarily. This job always goes to the favourite contractor whose quotation is the lowest. He is torn between loyalty and proper road repairs. He ends up by skimping. Providing shoddy material in small quantities. Result, the road is back in the same shape after one shower. There are several roads which have been fully repaired on paper only.

The narrow pavements, constructed at great cost, in the market right down to the 9th mile are too narrow for fat elephants to walk on, yet the flimsy man hole covers have completely given away or have large holes in them. Instead of being replaced, the holes have been blocked

by boulders in true village style. The dead absolutely incapable of breaking a leg in one of these holes.....

The living have forgotten to write so why not the dead? Who writes letters these days and even if they do, what guarantee is there that it will reach its destination in time or if at all. A letter takes 7 to 10 days to reach Kolkata from Kalimpong, two weeks to reach the country's capital, New Delhi, three weeks to Europe, U.S.A. and U.K. Is it worthwhile writing and waiting for an answer? Surely Elephant mail would be faster

Often letters arrive with foreign stamps missing, torn open, read and stuck back clumsily. Beautiful foreign cards, calendars and magazines are forcibly extricated from slow moving mail vans as they pass through the terai, by elephants. Their wives love the magazines, hang the calendars at the end of their tails instead of ribbons and the children love the cards. Once the post office Lord in a fit of enthusiasm wanted to reach every villager, literate or not. They stuck small post offices in remote corners of Kalimpong, hoping to serve humanity and also bolster the finances of the great postal system. These post offices do not pull their dead weight. Everybody knows where these post offices are but no one has any use for them. Their lords languish in paradise.

The latest brain wave of the Postal Lords was to introduce speed post. What speed and what post pray, when there are courier services and E-Mail. Speed post goes at normal speed, at three times the cost, while ordinary post is deliberately delayed. They have done their job well, they have provided a modern facility in paradise.

Very often on T.V., that is when both cable and electricity are available at the same time, we marvel at the tenacious and resourceful courier who manages to reach the ends of the earth, at tremendous personal risk, defying all odds just to deliver a letter or a parcel in record time. The courier lords of Kalimpong are not that stupid, they sit comfortably on their 'Gaddis' and send a message, days late, to the party concerned, to come and collect at their own risk. What's the hurry with the dead? Just deliver within town area and forget the rest. They would do well to employ elephants as delivery boys. They would be faster than snails. The receipt of a letter never comes back from the receiver.



The lords of the bottled gas cylinders are not bothered delivering these bottles to the dead. The delivery charges are included, in the fast moving price of the cylinders, everywhere else. The dead have no choice but to queue up for hours in front of a well-protected cage to pay up, collect vouchers, appoint coolies at high rates to take it to their homes or load it into a taxi. Bringing the empty cylinder back entails the very same harassing procedure. Those who live along main motorable roads can surely be supplied with cylinders at their door. Alas, since this convenience does not exist, like all other, the best solution would be to keep an elephant as a pet. They are well known for quantum quantities of gas, they can generate and store in their huge bellies. All one has to do is to attach the trunk of the friendly pet to the gas stove. Lo and behold, all combustion problems will be solved.

The dead should not have any addiction, specially not to a stupid T.V. serial. Invariably the T.V. screen will go blank, just when your favorite serial is due or in the middle of a thriller or football match. The T.V. cable lords do not entertain any malfunction of their ill maintained, antiquated machines after office hours. During their working hours all break down are of course due to the most abominable rascal, electricity. The only time the picture on T.V. comes without interruption, bright and clear is when the cable lords advertise the huge hike in their monthly subscription rates. Very often, your favorite channel disappears completely for days. The cable lords, residing in the satellite, are now held responsible for their insatiable desire for more and more scalps. Where will scalps come from? The dead have no scalps. Unfortunately, the elephants are absolutely unable to help and dead in this field. The only possible way they can help, is perhaps to put on an elephantine show of song and dance to amuse the dead without any interruption. So, we the dead, live ever in a wonderful place called paradise and take everything in our stride without rancor or malice. After all, we are the blessed dead, living in paradise, with no hope of going to the ultimate goal Heaven..... ■

New Moon

Departmental Stores



Janaki Lodge Building
Motor Stand,
Kalimpong

* Cosmetics * Food Grains *
Gift Items* Packed Food *
Consumer Durables* Sweets

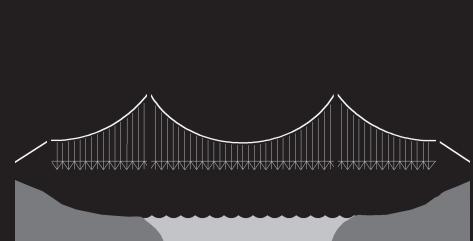
INFANT JESUS SCHOOL KALIMPONG

Phone: 03552-58686

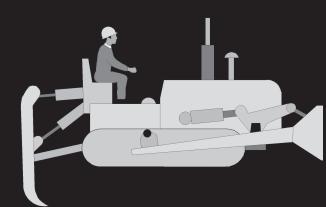
Classes From Nursery to Six
(Upgrading every year)

The school aims at preparing boys and girls
to become good, loyal and successful citizens
of their country, by offering them the
advantage of sound education along with
mental, spiritual and physical development.
(Hostel Facilities available)

John Poduyal Constructions



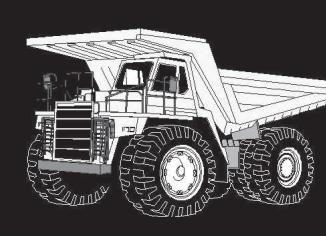
BRIDGES



ROADS



BUILDINGS



SOIL CUTTING

CONSTRUCTING A STRONGER KALIMPONG

Bong Church, Dr. B. L. Dikshit Road,
Kalimpong
Phone- 9832013691



If a person has ever gone through *Neel Darpan* written by Deenabandhu Mitra, he would jump at the idea of seeing and spending a few days in a place where a wealthy Indigo-owner used to live at the turn of the 20th century. Morgan House in Kalimpong in West Bengal is such a place.

Ensconced in the mountain of Durpindara, now surrounded by the Kalimpong Cantonment area and overlooking the valley downward, Morgan House is a heritage house with a history of its own. The empty flag post is still there, reminiscent of a past when the ailing Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru decided to spend a few days there to recuperate but could not make it due to sudden death.

Built on 16 acres of land in the hill, three kilometers off the centre of Kalimpong, Morgan House looks straight in the face of Kanchanjunga Range. It was built around 1930 to commemorate the wedding of the daughter of an Indigo owner with a jute baron Mr. Morgan. Since the couple died without heir, it was handed over to a Trustee Board and eventually given over to the Government of India and then to the West Bengal Government and was later turned into a tourist lodge.

Just before the advent of mighty Himalayan winter in the month of November, the House with its thick rectangular stone block wall to resist outside change of weather and its wooden floors

Far from the M addening Crowd

By Mira Rahman

and steel-framed glass-paned windows surprisingly keeps a normal temperature inside. One can view the snow capped ranges of Kanchanjunga glowing in the morning sun in golden colour while lying in bed from early morning till noon if the sky is clear. At dawn the glow is reddish gold reminding one of Oran gold immediately. (The gold mines in the kingdom of Oran lies side by side with copper mine, hence Oran gold has a distinct red hue of its own). The sunlight slowly descends on the lower ranges as if a huge torch is lighted up from the sky to help the viewer to get a crystal clear view of the valleys downwards and displays the border with Sikkim. The humongous brewery of Danny Denjappa there shines in the sun from the West Bengal border.

Kalimpong is a city of flowers, orchids and cactus. The orchid starts blooming from December onwards and stays up to June. Rare varieties of cactus is found, nurtured and grafted there. The price ranges from five hundred taka to five hundred thousand taka in India currency.

Nowhere in the world, I have visited so far, I have seen this profusion, combination and varieties of flowers growing wild



with exquisite colour and shape. In Morgan House alone I have counted five hundred varieties of flowers. The house has Roman paved ways from different angles and the split level stairs at the garden introduces one with uncounted flowers and foliage. The stone wall of the house is covered with vine and several other flowering creepers. The stunning panoramic beauty with riot of colour cannot be explained by writing.



So, it is no wonder the place where Morgan House is situated is called "Chandralok", meaning the land of moon, thus giving it a romantic touch. Chandralok includes the vast cantonment area, the army Golf course, the Tibetan Gurpha with big establishment, government lands and several viewpoints. The view-points show the West Bengal-Bhutan border and the confluence of the two rivers Teesta & Ranjit at Beni and Teesta & Rellie further down stream. From high altitude down below, rivers with their blue waters and white sands amidst green valley are a sight which is best felt but cannot be described. It is the Himalayan ambience in the Tarai region which communicates with the soul. One kilometer down from Durpindara is Gouripur House (now partially burnt) where poet Rabindranath Tagore was a frequent visitor. His famous poem Jannadin was written in this house.

At Morgan house, the camellia plants have turned into 15/16 feet trees and are in full bloom with flowers the size and look of huge roses. Three colours are there – shocking pink, white and slightly lavender. The Azaleas are coming out like stars from thick green bush. Yellow flowers of all shades and size are all over the place. "Aparajita", blue bell, Plancita (bright red, blood red, pink) lavender colour "Lazzawati", Bantara, Lantana are growing wild everywhere on way to Morgan House. There is one flower people call there 'Champa' and look like double Perjure in lilac and white which smells like 'rajanigandha' and its fragrance wafts over the whole valley. Once inside the house, whenever you move, the fragrance follows you. Then there are bunches of wild lilac colour flowers in tall plants all the time moving with the wind. The giant 'Dhutura' – the size of temple bells – are also there. There's a tree whose leaves with big heart shapes has clusters of magenta colour flowers dropping in cascade and is called Arti (arati) by local people. Then there is peuse tree (local dialect) with apricot-like blossoms covering its leaves. Every morning at about ten, three birds the size of my thumb sit on it and eat something from the blossom. Then there is wild 'maina' sitting quietly on the dark side of the pavement for a few minutes and then flying over to the wilderness.

Kalimpong is full of 'squash', a kind of vegetable which grows wild there. Everywhere the fruits are hanging from creepers and sometimes the children use these as throwing stones. The creeper thrives in marshy land. When I told the manager that I want to eat squash, he look at me with dismay. Then I explained we buy it for 500 or 600 taka a kilo in Dhaka (at Agora).

This tourist lodge has an understated elegance with its old look, spotlessly clean wooden floor, spacious bathroom, fire-place in every room, daily change of linens, towels, unfailing room service and daily arrangement of fresh flowers everywhere, whether a guest is there or not.

The staff, though government employees have unflinching sense of duty and loyalty to their jobs and defeat service. Many celebrities have stayed in this lodge. Nargis, Sunil Dutt, Rajkumar, Om Prakash, Kishore Kumar, Uttam Kumar and many others have come here. Chester Bowles once the American ambassador in India, spent a few days here. When we were there, twelve Swedish travellers came to stay in the lodge. I came to know they have been coming there for the last three years like migratory birds. Our 16-day stay in Morgan House gave us absolute bliss and peace of mind. ■

Recalling the Road to Lhasa from Kalimpong

|| Vimal Khawas ||

The recent publication of the official maps by China shows Sikkim as part of India. The recognition of Sikkim by the Chinese Government almost 25 years since this small Himalayan Kingdom became a part of the Republic of India has thrown before us tremendous challenges and opportunities. The reason why China came up with such decision after 25



years and why not in 1975 itself is a matter of varied historical perceptions and high level of geo-politics between India and China that is beyond the scope of this write up to examine. However, having come to a broad mutual understanding on Sikkim and Tibet last year when the then Prime Minister of India Shri Atal Behari Bajpai visited China, India and China are now poised to move away from the sterile geo-politics of the past to a new emphasis on geo-economics.

In this connection we have been repeatedly talking about the reopening of the old (silk) trade route from Nathula Pass in Sikkim through Lhasa to the Chinese market, tourism across Nepal, Sikkim and Tibet/China, and future development prospects of the state of Sikkim. Opening up of the Himalayas for trade and tourism will lead to rapid economic development on both sides of the border and reconnect economic and cultural spaces that were torn asunder by the Sino-Indian hostility. There have been serious discourses on the up gradation of the present Jawaharlal Nehru Marg between Gangtok and Nathu La to facilitate the commercial traffic. An expert committee has been set up by the Government of Sikkim in this respect consisting of senior civil servants and academicians headed by a well-known economist and professor of Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Dr. Mahendra P.

Lama who is also incidentally the chief economic advisor to the Chief Minister of Sikkim.

We however, have failed to bring in the national policy discourses the old trade links between Kalimpong and Lhasa in Tibet through Jelep La. This historic trade route between Kalimpong and Lhasa was responsible for building Kalimpong as one of the most prominent trade centers of Indian and Tibetan goods and raw materials till the early 1960s when the route was unexpectedly closed following the Sino-Indian war.

In fact, the emergence of the present Kalimpong Town to its

present status can in many ways be attributed to the trade links between Lhasa-Kalimpong-Calcutta and vice versa. In other words, Kalimpong flourished as a trade center of Indian and Tibetan/Chinese goods. The frequent Tibetan

Inscriptions on the rocks along the Kalimpong-Jelep La-Lhasa route is believed to be the route mark for the travelers and traders so that they would not lose their way.

A selective linear survey of the elderly Marwari and Tibetan traders along the R.C. Mintri Road and Relli Road highlight that almost all the basic goods and raw materi-



als like clothes, shoes (Tibetan boots), spices, sweets, watches, candles, cottons etc were traded from Kalimpong to Lhasa. Further, a traditional Tibetan dress locally called Bakhu and its associates like Chuba and Pangde were tailored in Kalimpong and transported to Lhasa. From Lhasa, raw materials like wool

of the sheep, crude silver and gold were brought to the market in Kalimpong. Mr. Satya Narayan Agarwal, aged 75 years old, still vividly remembers how he as a young retailer used to sell clothes and other semi-finished textiles to the Tibetan counterparts during the 1950s. In those days there were hardly any vehicles in Kalimpong. Hundreds of ponies used to trek down from Lhasa via Jelep La to Kalimpong and vice versa. Sitaram Chawrasia, aged 63 years, of Bagdhara Road profoundly recalls how he as a young boy enjoyed the dances of the Tibetan traders while they brought hundreds of thirsty ponies to Bagdhara to feed them water. Mr. D. S. Khawas of Suruk Dong Busty, aged 66 years, is still to forget those days of late 1950s when he as a teenager used to witness hundreds of ponies in and around Bagdhara while he visited Kalimpong Bazar with his family elders during week days.

Survey also highlights that most of the people including traders in Kalimpong have no knowledge about the reopening of the border through Nathu La. When this writer informed the old Marwari and Tibetan traders about the recent talk of the Government of India and the excitement and enthusiasm of Sikkim particularly the Chief Minister Mr. Pawan Chamling to reopen the old silk route of Gangtok-Nathu La-Lhasa they pointed out that the trade route of Kalimpong-Jelep La-Lhasa is easier, shorter and smoother



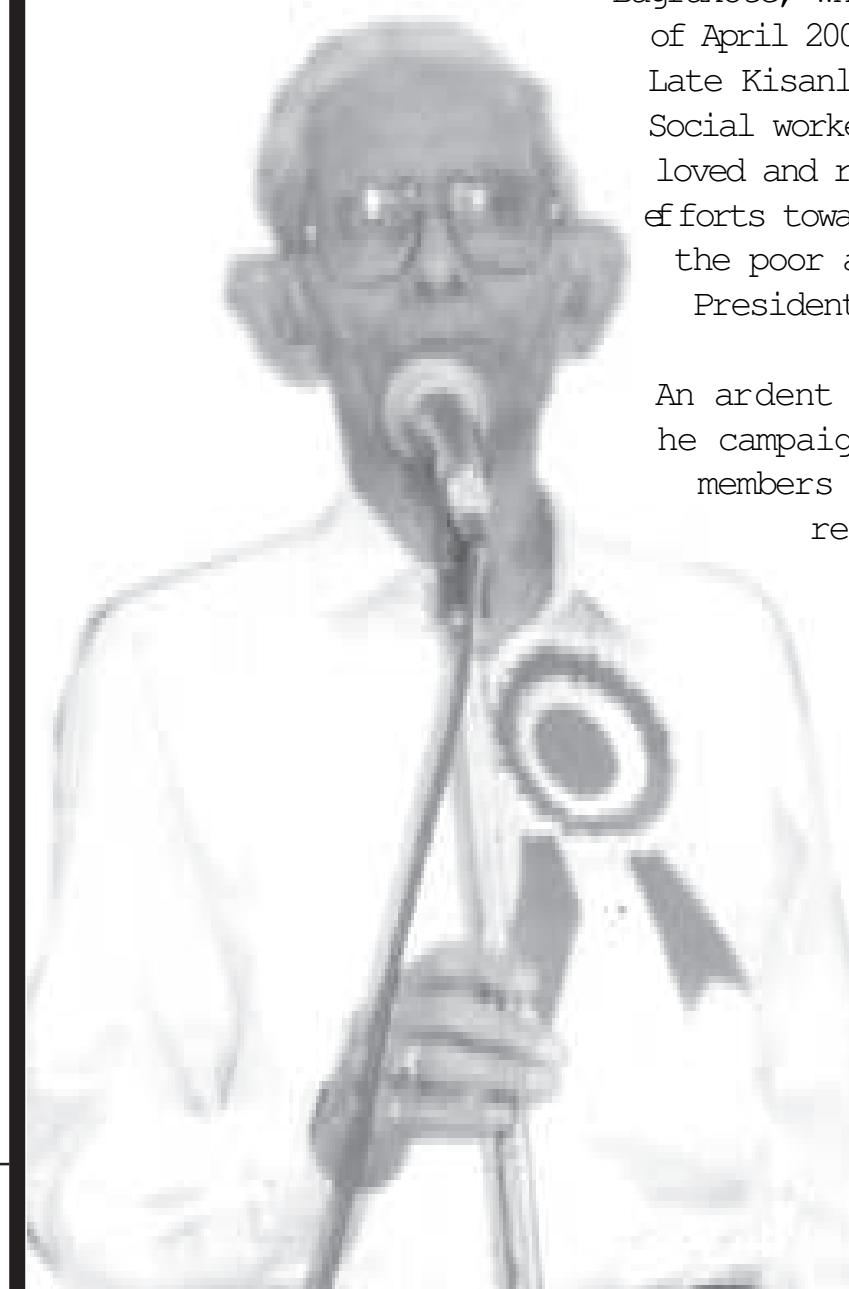
than the former. Moreover, they recalled that the latter route was more important during the pre-revolution days than the former with larger volume of goods and raw materials and the corresponding traders finding their place through Kalimpong-Jelep La-Lhasa route.

It is, however, something uncanny that Kalimpong has not found place in the national and regional policy discourses as a major trade center of Lhasa till the early 1960s and that the resumption of the trade between China/Tibet and India (Sikkim) should also benefit Kalimpong and its surrounding. Besides, Kalimpong and its surrounding hills are not less picturesque than the Sikkim Himalaya. Kalimpong hills have tremendous tourism potential particularly nature tourism if it is properly planned and rationally structured.

It is high time that the leaders of Darjeeling Hills, activists, academicians and the general public deliberate on the above discussed issue and demand the recognition of Kalimpong in the policy debate as a historic trade center with strong trade link with Lhasa (Tibet) and that the reopening of the border for trade and other economic activities mainly tourism need also to be considered via Kalimpong-Jelep La as Kalimpong along with its counterparts Darjeeling and Kurseong Hills also deserve to benefit the fruits of the audacious venture of the Government of India equally as that of Sikkim. Further, opening up of the Jelep La would check the commercial load to the carrying capacity of Nathu La and its surrounding and hence would share environmental fallouts due to heavy human and vehicular traffic ■

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IN LOVING MEMORY



In loving memory of Shri Kisan Lakhota of Bagrakote, who left for his heavenly abode on the 17th of April 2009 after a short illness at the age of 72. Late Kisanlal Lakhota, who was a very prominent Social worker and Social activist of the region was loved and respected by one and all, for his sincere efforts towards improving the quality of life amongst the poor and needy of the region. He was a former President of the Lions Club of Bagrakote and an Advisor to the Minority Front.

An ardent supporter of the Gorkhaland movement, he campaigned tirelessly amongst his community members and well wishers to garner support and resources for the struggle for Gorkhaland.

His honesty, sincerity, kindness and generosity has earned him a place within the hearts of every person he was in contact with.

He was also a highly religious person who built several many temples in the region and his contributions in all religious activities in the region will be remembered by all.

His physical absence will forever remain now but his memories will live on within every person who knew him.

Anand & Kavita Lakhota
Cellular Zone
Kalimpong

SILENT KILLER

| By Monila De |

Our late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's effort to control the burgeoning population of India lost her the elections. Her method of birth control was met with stubborn resistance and rejected by the public. Little did she know when she died that not only a novel method of birth control but of reducing the population of India, was in the making. During Indira's time, men were bribed with transistor radios to undergo sterilization but now no such coercion is necessary. People are only too eager to own a cell phone, the greatest status symbol of all times. They have not the slightest knowledge of the health hazard these possess. The cell phone's proximity to the body can cause impotence in men and can cause many other damages to the body. Isn't this a much much simpler method than having to go through an operation and receiving a cheap little transistor as a gift???

Alas, if only Indira was in power now, she would have distributed cell phones to all men free of cost and probably would have even made the Sim card free!!! I am sure men, who once shied away from such an operation believing that they would lose their ability to produce a son after the unteenth daughter and also lose their virility, would queue up in the thousands to receive this new weapon against potency, called the cell phone. What better method of birth control than a Nation full of impotent men who can neither produce children nor resort to rape..

In this modern world of communication technology, cell phones play a huge part and have come to stay. People are dependent on them for various reasons but most of all in an emergency. Unfortunately the cell phone despite all its mobility is of little use in an emergency, especially in Kalimpong. Inevitably every time you try to make a call, particularly in an urgent situation, either the line is "busy" or the phone one is trying to call is "out of range".

To remedy these malfunctions, the cell phone companies are vying with each other to install cell phone towers on every vantage point of Kalimpong. They are indeed serving cell phone owners better, not only by improving the quality of communication but by annihilating them totally. Kalimpong is being turned into a killing field.

The modernizing of India in the form of cell phone transmitting towers in close proximity to human habitation spells disaster. These towers emitting electromagnetic radiation in the form of radio frequency waves are not seen, felt, heard or smelt. They are the silent killers invading your home and environment. One cannot possibly run away or hide from them. They are everywhere, working ceaselessly twenty four hours a day, everyday silently doing their job of killing you softly.

The lethal towers radiate such powerful RF electromagnetic energy that not only humans but birds, beasts and plants are all at risk. Those at closer proximity of 200 to 300 meters are most affected.

If the cell phone is responsible for causing impotency in men, the towers finish the job of birth control by reducing fertility in women and animals and give to miscarriage very often.



CAN YOUR MOBILE HARM YOU ???

Long and heavy use
can, say scientists.....

CANCER

Radiation not strong enough to break chemical bonds in the body. But heavy use may enhance the risk of brain cancer.



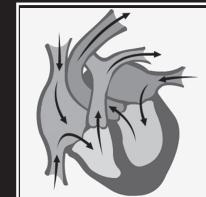
TUMOURS

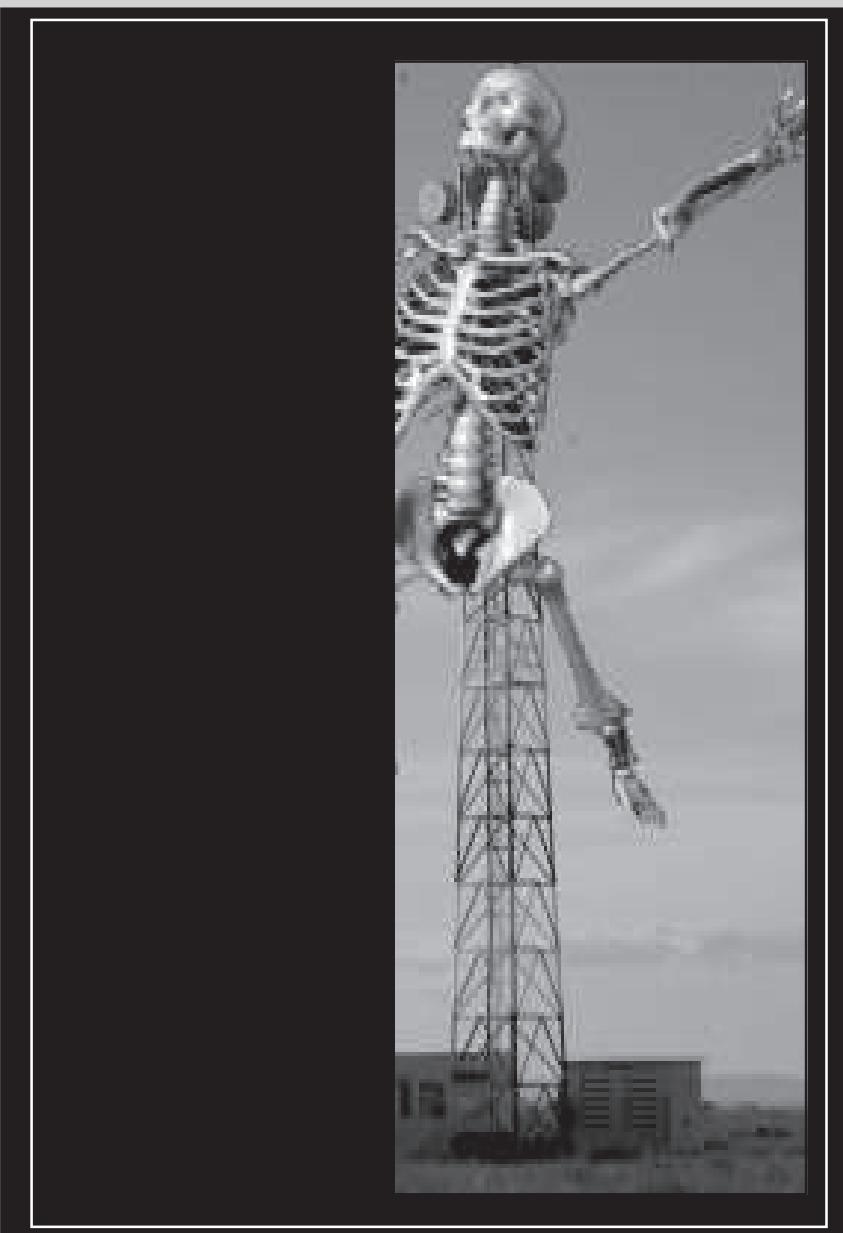
Scientists link up long-term use to brain tumours. The risk of ear tumours is believed to go up four-folds.



DEGENERATION

Radiation may break the protective blood brain barrier as seen in diseases like MS, Alzheimer's or Parkinson's





The worst hit by these radio frequency are the children. Their tender bodies and tiny heads attract RF waves much more. They are prone to develop childhood leukemania apart from memory loss, behaviour changes, difficulty in concentration, slow down of motor skills, headaches, depression, loss of sleep, retarded learning and many more aberrations will certainly come to the fore as they grow up bombarded by these RF waves. These are findings by scientists from all over the world. Not mere conjecture. So be aware...

It has been scientifically proved by scientists all over the world that RF waves emitted by the cell phone towers effect humans and have long term health hazards. The health hazards are numerous, such as increased cell growth of brain cancer, increased breaks in double and single strand DNA, changes in sleep pattern, headaches, neurological changes, increased blood pressure, damage to eye cells, metabolic changes, cytogenic effects which affect cancer, Alzheimer, neurodegenerative disease, cardiovascular problems, rash, brain haemorrhage, epilepsy, nose bleed, strokes, break down of the immunity system will attract diseases even without being infected by HIV, muscle fatigue, pain, dizziness and depression. Dr. Henri Lai's review states that RF of relative low intensity can affect the nervous system, change in blood brain barrier, morphology, electro physiology, neurotransmitter functions, cellular metabolism and calcium efflux. Genetic effects have been reported in brains of animals after exposure to RF. These changes can lead to functional changes in the nervous system and behavioural changes.

The charge of these towers are phenomenal, they can beam lethal doses of radiation for miles. So imagine the impact it has on people living within 500 metre radius of these killer towers. A tower erected atop a mountain has an even better range. The vibrations are so powerful that if built on top of a building the concrete disintegrates and turns into rubble eventually. In the short term, the monetary benefits to the building owner for allowing cell phone companies to install towers on their building top may be attractive but in the long run these very towers would eventually lead to the total collapse of the building.

Kalimpong is dotted with these towers of death and destruction. They look like giant skeletons, an ominous reminder to their victims of their fate. Apart from their powers of destruction they are eye sores turning beautiful Kalimpong in an ugly hill station.

The latest tower soaring into the skies on Atisha Road, is in a thickly populated residential area. There are at least twelve children's hostels and this road, an Old Age Home and the St. Joseph's Convent, St. Augustines' School and the St. Philomena School teeming with children, are all within 300 meters of this tower, as the crow flies. These children are at high risk while parents and teachers are oblivious of the risks that these towers pose to the future of their children.

The first to be hit are the birds but they can fly away to safer places, that is, if any are still left. Humans are stuck to their fate, so are the plants and trees. Livestock are just as vulnerable and what will happen to the flourishing Cacti and Flower nurseries is yet to be seen.

The simple and naïve people of Kalimpong are vying with each other to get cell phone companies to erect their transmitting towers on their land or on top of their houses for a pittance, thereby,

CAN YOUR MOBILE HARM YOU ???

Long and heavy use
can, say scientists.....

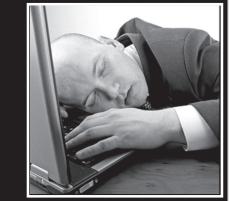
DEAFNESS

Long -term use, especially on one ear, may damage tissues in the inner-ear and lead to deafness.



SLEEPLESSNESS

May activate brain's stress system: make people more alert, decrease the ability to wind down and induce sleep.



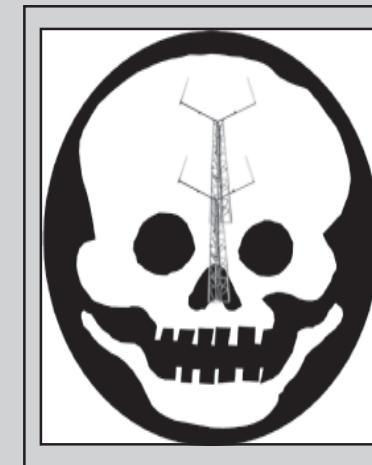
PREGNANCY

Pregnant women, who regularly use mobiles are more likely to have children with behavioral problems.



signing their death warrants. The houses that they build with their hard earned money will soon disintegrate one day and their children, if they are still alive and well, will curse them for leaving them with a load of rubble.

The cell phone companies come here to build their towers without informing the residents about the hazards within a radius of 500 metres and taking responsibilities of their future health. As for the municipality, they are riding on a prosperous band wagon and therefore, grant them permission only too eagerly without informing the residents of the hazards and taking their permission to build the towers.

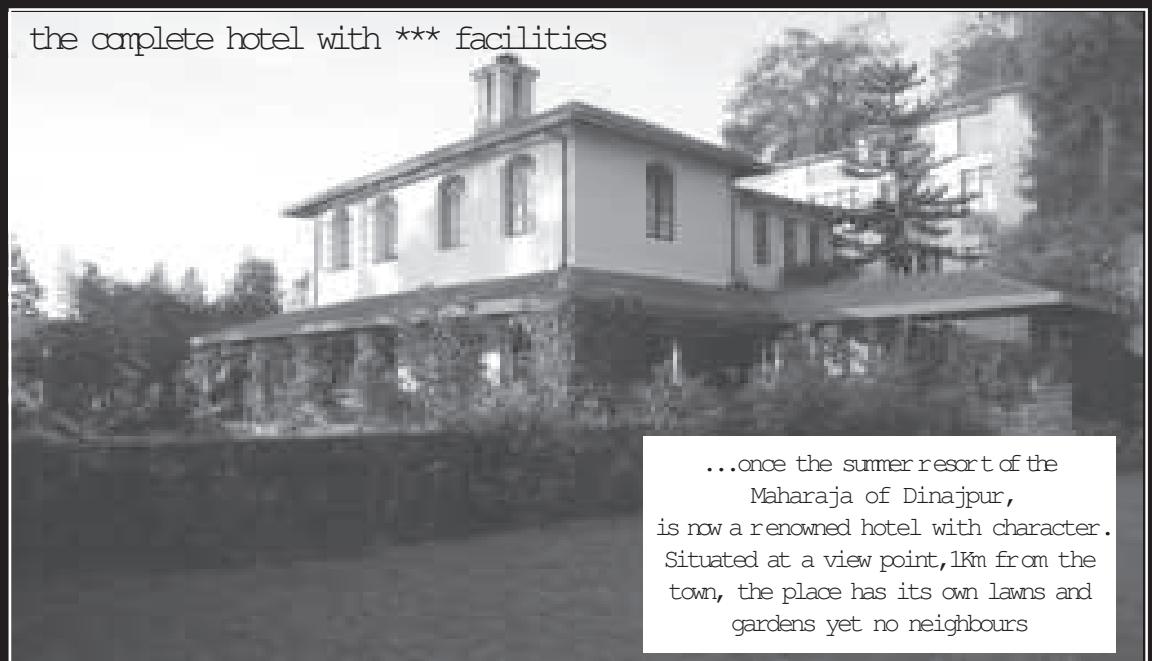


The cell phone companies will vehemently deny any ill effects that the towers will cause and declare them absolutely safe. They disregard all rules and regulations of planting them in heavily populated areas. They are obliged to take permission from the residents before constructing a tower, which they never do. The municipality turns a blind eye and readily gives permission. They are obliged to take permission from the residents of each ward and area covered before giving the NOC. But has this ever been done in Kalimpong???

The residents of Kalimpong are being led to the gallows blind folded like animals in the name of progress. Wake up, it is for you to decide whether you want progress or health. It will be far quicker, easier and painless exit from this world if you go and jump into the Teesta instead. ■

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TRANSFERRED JEALOUSY

— Pravin Moktan

Many years ago when the Gorkhaland agitation was at its peak and the intellectuals ensconced in the cosy chairs of academia were having a field day analyzing the various causes that could have given rise to the sudden burst of righteous Gorkha vengeance against the Bengali establishment, an analyst propounded among his other theories, one called the phenomenon of "transferred jealousy" which he thought could explain why the peace loving people of the Hills were up in arms against the State. In a nutshell this theory held that the people here saw their lack of progress in relation to the fast momentum that the statehood had given to the neighbouring state of Sikkim. After all as some people contend even today, wasn't Sikkim civilized by the Clerks, Officers and the ubiquitous teacher, all supplied by the education apparatus of the Darjeeling Hills. So if Sikkim with its initially woeful state of administrative machinery could rise to such dizzy heights of progress why couldn't we with the manpower and the resources at our disposal. There could be some sense there, hadn't the learned lecturer in all his rigorous intellectual discipline made a watertight argument for his case?

Well fifteen years hence and what does a visit to Gangtok do to the average Kalimpong person? It does induce jealousy to say the least, after all the streets are cleaner, the roads smoother, the traffic more disciplined, the buildings more swankier and the tourists more numerous and certainly less harassed. There is a certain well-ordered air about Gangtok. Its Police has a sense of purpose and even the most strained of relationships, the one between the uniformed law enforcer and the driver seem, well at the surface



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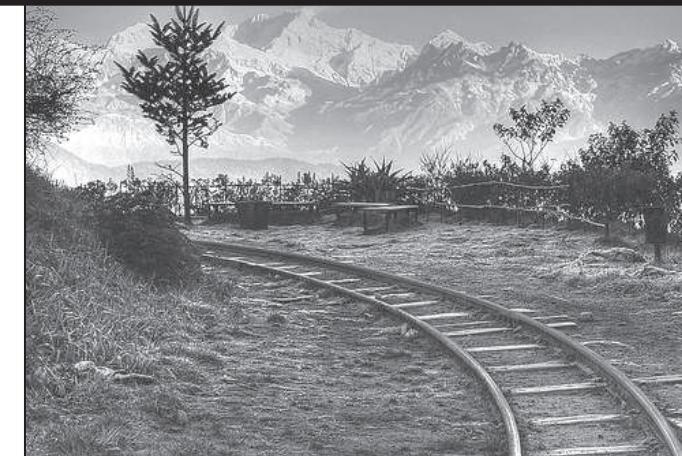
at least, cosy and functional. The citizens are happy notwithstanding the rules, which for the freewheeling Kalimpong fellow more used to being driven around in a lunar landscape squeezed foursome in the front seat of a van, may at times be a little too repressive to the cherished personal freedom of being able to park anywhere at will and throwing anything anywhere.

In a recent issue of the Kathmandu daily "The Nepali Times" there was an article by its editor Kunda Dixit who apparently much feted by the head honchos of the Gangtok bureaucracy and enthused by the conditions that he saw prevailing in the capital, wrote that even Kathmandu could learn a lesson or two about governance from the Charming set up.

In a sense it seemed as if Gangtok's moment of truth had come. Its hour in the sun, after all, far from being compared to its poor cousin from across the river here as an erudite editor of another country holding it up as a role model for his own capital. Cosmopolitan Kathmandu, desperately trying to shed its image as a hippie hangout of another time had finally found an ideal to attain. But we could digress a bit and point out another fact lest Gangtok stats reveling in the glory of its well enforced and certainly seems to typify the let live attitude that epitomizes India.

Lets analyze one small point, if the number of passengers allowed to be ferried around in taxis was limited to the number that is allowed in Gangtok where would the fares head to in these troubled times? And

if the Municipality fathers munificence blessed us with the quality of roads that has already sent many of its motorists to their early in Gangtok, where would we house our injured and maimed now that the new hospital itself seems to be in the sick bed?



EARLY HISTORY OF THE DARJEELING HIMALAYAN RAILWAYS

By Sandip C. Jain



Ever since Mr. J.W. Grant, Commercial Resident in Maldia, set his foot in Darjeeling in the cold February afternoon of 1829, becoming the first European to ever do so in this Land of the Thunderbolts, Darjeeling had always found favors with the ruling Government of the then British Empire. Not only was it lavished with funds for the development and the welfare of the town it was also maintained as a showpiece in an effort to further massage the egos of the East India Co. One out of the many reasons for the largeness thrown towards Darjeeling was that it wanted to project Darjeeling as a model under the colonial rule. Darjeeling and its smaller neighbors like

Kurseong and Kalimpong too hence benefited from the generosity of the British Rulers.

The British Government of that day, in an effort to provide a sanctuary for its Officers from the scorching heat of the Indian Plains, steadily promoted and developed the area as a hill station. Gradual progress in the tourism related infrastructure in the area, soon saw it becoming the Queen amongst all the Hill Stations in India.

Like all Queens, Darjeeling too needed a jewel in her crown befitting a Queen; Darjeeling Himalayan Railways was the jewel that was so far lacking in her crown. The idea for a railway link between Siliguri and Darjeeling was first mooted in the year 1870 by Mr. Franklin Prestage, who was at that time the Sole agent of the Eastern Bengal Railway Co. He proposed to build the rail line along the old Hill Cart Road which was used by the Tonga Service and which was later destroyed due to landslides. He placed a detailed scheme for the laying of this Railway Line in the year 1878 before the then

Lt. Governor Sir. Ashley Eden. The Lt. Governor appointed a high power committee to study the proposal who reported the feasibility and advantages of the proposed Railway. The Committee reported that Rs. 1.5 lakhs were required annually for the upkeep of the existent Hill Cart Road connecting Darjeeling to Siliguri and the building the tramway would help defray this cost. In later years after DHR came into service, this assessment held true and it was found that the Government was indeed saving a lot of money on this front thus lessening the burden on the taxpayers.

In the year 1879, the proposed scheme by Franklin Prestage was accepted and construction work started on a war footing. By March 1880, the line was opened upto Tindharia and by the end of the year upto Kurseong. In July 1881, the train first rolled into Darjeeling town. On the 15th of



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September 1881, the original name given to the Railway "Darjeeling Steam Tramway Co." was changed to a more dignified appellation of "The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway." In the same year, M/S Gillanders Aubuthnot & Co. were appointed as the first booking and handling agents of the DHR.

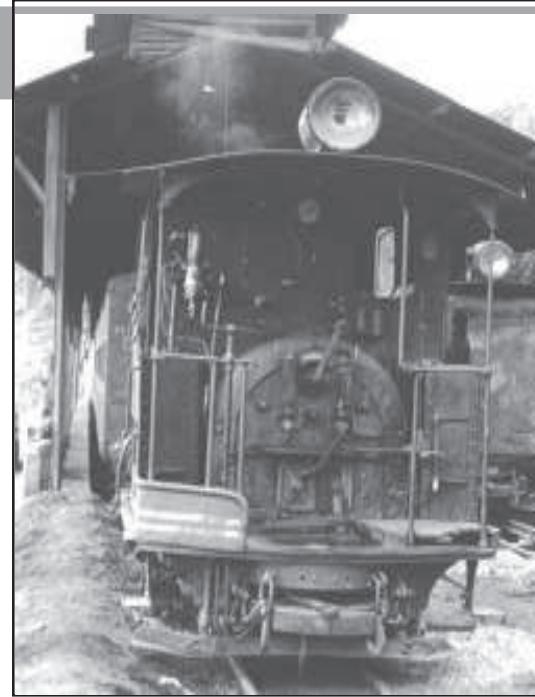
The first engines that were used were ones, which were capable of drawing only a load of 7 tons. It was later upgraded to a more powerful one which could pull a load of 35 tons. The engine first used could pull its carriages at an average speed of 11km per hour while the engine that was later introduced could travel at an average speed of 18 Km per hour. The DHR ran on a 24 inch gauge, each wheel being just 19 .5 inches in diameter.

The fortunes of the DHR increased fast and its fame spread far and wide not just because of the simply breathtaking terrain that it passed through with the mighty Kanchenjunga providing a dramatic backdrop but more so because of the scientific marvel that it still is. The building of the Toy train line upto Darjeeling and then upto Teesta, was an engineering feat unmatched in the Hills, even till date. Initially though, the passenger carriages that were used were of real basic nature with small four wheeled trolleys that had canvas coverings. Two wooden benches served as seats. Later years saw them being replaced by standard Railway Carriages measuring 26 feet 6 inches long and modern facilities. In 1914, the first workshop in the Hills was opened at Tindharia, where all the Rolling stock were built with the exception of the wheels which were imported from a manufacturing unit in Manchester, United Kingdom. The first engine used were the standard of that time with four coupled

wheels and weighing 14 tons with cylinders being 11 inches bore and 14 inches trake. A Garnatte, or eight wheeled articulated engine weighing 28 tons were later used. The steel rails were of an exceptionally high quality weighing 41.25 lbs per yard. The popularity of the DHR increased by each passing year and as per figures available for the year ending 31st March 1920, the Railway carried 2,63,083 passengers and 61,704 tons of goods in that particular year.

On the 15th of May 1915, the Teesta Valley Line of the DHR was started with the idea of connecting Sikkim and Kalimpong by Railway to the rest of the country. The line started in Siliguri and ran upto Geilkhola (about 4 km from

Teesta) with further plans to take the line upto either Gangtok or some other village near Gangtok. The old PWD road, which ran along the roaring Teesta River, was used to construct the Rail line. This old road, which had been washed away in various places by the great landslip of 1899, was repaired and the Rail line was laid on it. The Teesta Valley Line was mainly used to transport Wool imported from Tibet and oranges from Sikkim . As per data available, upto 20 tons of oranges were transported from Sikkim during the peak orange growing season.



The Indian Railways formally took over the management of the DHR on 20th October 1948 after Independence. In the land slides that took place in the year 1950, the Rail line was washed away and the cost of repair of the line were deemed too heavy for the newly formed Indian Railway to meet.

Thus was ended the dream of DHR to connect Gangtok and Kalimpong to the rest of the country by Rail liners and this dream was effectively run over for ever. ■













GALAXY

MAIN ROAD, KALIMPONG

FOR THE LATEST IN FASHION













Kalimpong

Darjeeling Early Political History

The District was part of the dominions of the Raja of Sikkim. In 1706 what is now the Kalimpong subdivision of the District was taken from the Raja of Sikkim by the Bhutanese. The Rajas later became engaged in unsuccessful struggles with the Gurkhas who had seized power in Nepal and invaded Sikkim in 1780. During the next 30 years they overran Sikkim as far east as the Tista and conquered and annexed the Tarai. In the meantime war broke out between the East India Company and the Nepalese at the end of which in 1817 by the treaty of Titaliya the tract which the Nepalese had wrested from the Raja of Sikkim was ceded to the Company. The Company restored the whole of the country between the Mechi and the Tista to the Raja and guaranteed his sovereignty. Sikkim was thus maintained as a buffer State between Nepal and Bhutan.

The District was included in the Rajshahi Division until October 1905 when, as a result of the Partition of Bengal, it was transferred to the Bhagalpur Division. With the re-arrangement of the provinces it was retransferred to the Rajshahi Division in March 1912.

The District was formerly a non-regulation District, that is to say, Acts and Regulations did not come into force unless they were specially extended to the District. Darjeeling had no representative in the Legislative Council constituted under the Government of India Act 1919. It was excluded and declared a backward tract. The Administration of the District was not subject to vote of the Legislature. The effect of exclusion was that any Act passed by the Legislature which extended to the whole of Bengal automatically applied to the Darjeeling District, unless the Government in Council directed that the Act in question should not apply or that it should apply subject to such notifications as the Governor thought proper.

Events leading to the Anglo-Bhutan War of 1865

In the middle of the 19th century, peace between the Bhutanese Government and the British rulers of India was punctured several times. The Bhutanese rulers constantly were engaged in aggression on the borders causing in the loss of property and innocent lives.

In 1862, news tricked in that the Bhutanese were making hostile preparations with intent to enter and occupy the Darjeeling region. Crises was averted when troops were dispatched from Dinapore (present day Danapur near Patna) and stationed on the border. In 1863, in an effort to build better relations with the Bhutanese, the rulers of India sent Sir Ashley Edens to Bhutan with a peace proposal but at the same time he was directed to ask the Bhutanese rulers for return of property previously plundered by them.

The Bhutanese rulers treated the peace proposal with contempt and more importantly, Sir Ashley Edens was treated with gross indignity and humiliated before all. Further Sir Ashley was forced to sign a document by which the British Government was to renounce the Bhutan Duars (Dooars). Sir Ashley could only just manage to slip out of Punakha (Bhutan) under the cover of darkness and return to Darjeeling in April 1866.

After further negotiations failed, the British Government of India decided to take the Bhutan Duars and the forts of Dalingkot, Pasaka and Diwangiri so that further incursions and mischief on the part of Bhutan could be prevented. The small village of Kalimpong fell under the control of the fort of Dalingkot at that time.

In the winter of 1864, the forces of the then Government of India entered Bhutan and routed the Bhutanese forces. The fortresses were occupied with much ease and the entire Duars area was occupied by January 1865.

On 11th November 1865, the treaty exhort from Sir Ashley Edens was scrapped and the Treaty of Sinchula was executed. Under the treaty of Sinchula, the Bhutan Duars with the passes leading into the Hills were ceded to the British in return for an annual subsidy.

Thus was Kalimpong separated from Bhutan and merged with India. This was the last addition to the District of Darjeeling which thus acquired its present dimensions.

SARBOJANIK DURGA PUJA OF KALIMPONG

It can be said without any iota of hesitation that Durga Puja in Kalimpong would not be the same amount of fun, festivity and gaiety had it not been for the Kalimpong Sarbojanik Durga Puja, which is organized each year by the Milani Club. This year's puja was special for the reason that this was the Platinum Jubilee celebration for this particular puja.

Started in the year 1929 on the initiative of late Ganesh Chandra Pine and his brothers Kartiek and Choku Pine [of present day Kalimpong Stores (Kodak Studio)], this puja had a very humble beginning. The first ever puja held in the year 1929 was managed on a shoestring budget of Rs. 500.00 which was collected from donations from the public. The idol of Durga Ma and others, like today was made by artists in Siliguri but the manner in which it was transported to Kalimpong was very different from how they are today. The idols were brought from Siliguri to Giel Khola (then known as Kalimpong Road Station) by the toy train that used to ply between Siliguri and Giel Khola. It was then loaded on to the Ropeway, which used to carry it to the Ropeway Station in Kalimpong. This station was situated as the premises of the present day Pranami School. From here it was transported to the Puja Mandap on bullock carts with a procession that included Dhakis and devotees.

The venue of the puja as well as the name of the organizing club has several changes. This puja was earlier held at the Thana Dara at the site of the present day Super Market and was shifted to the Town Hall premises after the construction of the Super Market some years back. The name of the organizers also changed from the Bengali Club to the Matri Sanga to the present day Milani Club. Despite the changes in venue the festivity, joy, devotion and the beating of the Dhaks remains the same till date. This Puja held each year since the last 75 years has much popularity and the same can be measured from the fact that people of the caliber of Dr. Sudhi Ranjan Das, Ex. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and Smt. Pratima Devi, daughter in law of Gurudev Rabindra Nath Tagore have been attached to the puja as patrons.

Facts on Kalimpong

FIRST FEW STEPS OF CHRISTIANITY IN KALIMPONG

Christianity one of the oldest and the foremost religions of the world today, had a very late and modest start in Kalimpong and its surroundings. Before Rev. William Macfarlane set foot in Kalimpong, the entire village of then Kalimpong and its peripheral areas had not a single native Christian. People were either Hindus or Buddhists by faith. After Rev. Macfarlane came to Kalimpong as the Guild Missionary in the year 1870, he set upon the task of setting the wheels of the Mission work in motion.

In 1874, as per records available, Ganga Prasad Pradhan who was a mission worker at Darjeeling and Luxman Singh, a teacher, were baptized by the Church. In the same year, Sukhman Limbu, a resident of Kalimpong was also baptized. Sukhman, incidentally later became the first native preacher in the Kalimpong region. On the 30th of November 1875, Jangabir, a teacher too gave himself up to the service of the Church. Together they began evangelistic work in Kalimpong and on March 12, 1876, as a fruit of their labour, Raghbir, a cultivator too was brought into the folds of Christianity. Unfortunately, due to the out break of Cholera in Kalimpong, both Jangabir and Raghbir fell victim to this deadly epidemic alongwith hundreds of other in the region.

During this very period that the epidemic was sweeping the town, a Lepcha elderly lady and a Fakir, were baptized on the 25th of August 1876. The number of local Christians got a further addition when on the 7th of April 1878, a Lepcha couple by the name of Dyongshi and Sanglabong alongwith their child took up the teachings of the Bible. Later that year another Lepcha youth by the name of Namthak too turned towards this religion.

By the next few years, Christianity had started to gain much ground in Kalimpong. As per a report prepared in 1882, there were a total of 287 Christians residing in the four villages of Kalimpong, Mangwa, Sitong and Sunthong numbering 139, 57, 77 & 14 respectively and this was an increase of 136 during the year. 1883, Ganga Prasad Pradhan had started to translate the scriptures into the Nepali language.

A similar report placed in 1885, tells of 368 baptized Christians, 203 at Kalimpong, 45 at Mangwa, 82 at Sitong and 23 at Sunthong and 17 at Pemling.

By the hard work and tireless efforts put in by the early preachers, Christianity profited and today Kalimpong too has to accept without hesitation that it too has profited due to the developmental based religious propagation of the Christian Missionaries. ■

Kalimpong

COMMUNIST LEADERS IN KALIMPONG

In 1949, the Communist party was banned by the Central government and hence, as a result all leaders of the party were arrested. However, some of the eminent leaders of the party were able to run away from Calcutta and hide in Darjeeling in order to escape persecution. Among these leaders were Jyoti Basu, Sushil Chatterjee and Satyen Majumdar who stayed incognito at Singamari. Leaders like Nripen Chakravorty who later became the Chief Minister of Tripura lived as a tourist at the Munda Khoti locality in Sonada. Almost thirteen years later, during the Indo-Sino War, the Communist Party once again came under the heavy hand of the central Government, as leaders and party workers were being arrested en-masse under 'Indian Security Act'. Leaders like Ratanlal Brahmain, Anand Pathak, S. P. Lepcha, Bhadrabahadur Hamal, R. B. Khatiwada, Krishnabhakta Paudyal, Charu Majumdar, Kanu Sanyal, Soren Bose, Biren Bose, B. B. Lama, Satyen Majumdar and Rajen Sinha were all arrested from Darjeeling. One eminent leader, H. B. Rai had gone underground for 3 months; however when he came out to take a walk at Chowrasta thinking that things had setted down, he was immediately arrested. All these leaders were kept at Alipore, Presidency and Berhampore Central Jail. A total of 95 leaders from Darjeeling alone had been arrested.

LACE INDUSTRY OF KALIMONG

The missionaries that made Kalimpong what it is today, were people of great vision and foresight. They knew that just educating the masses and preaching to them Christianity, would not actually lift the masses out of the economical hardships that they were facing. Hence they initiated moves to train the locals in various trade skills. One type of skill that they started to impart knowledge on, to the people of Kalimpong was in the art of Lace making.

Not many are aware but Lace making was a big time business in the town during the early part of this century. Since 1905, the outstanding industry undoubtedly was Lace making. Mrs. Katherine Grahams who founded the Kalimpong Home Industries in the year 1894 was also the prime mover behind this industry. To teach the women folk of Kalimpong the finer points of this art, Mrs. Grahams searched out teacher who was an expert in not just the ordinary Torchon and Cluny laces but the finer kinds like Brussels, Italian, Honitan and many others. The expert, a Ms. Catherine Channer, was employed and her salary and other expenses were taken care off by the government, which was requested for by Mrs. Grahams.

After laying the foundation for the industry and running it for four years Ms. Channer had to leave for home due to ill heath but not before she had trained a successor in Miss Gladys Korb and several other locals, who continued to train others in this fine art of lace making.

By 1913, three hundred workers were engaged in this trade and in that year the sale of laces in Kalimpong along gave a profit of Rs. 9000.00 (a sum which was really big at that time). The laces from the town had acquired such fame by then that special orders was received by Kalimpong for laces to decorate the dresses of Her Highness, Queen Mary.

Unluckily, this industry did not survive too long after the missionaries went back. May be if the trade had continued to flourish in the town, Kalimpong would today have been spoken in the same breath as Nottingham or Brussels.

Rev. D.G. Manuel, the author of the much acclaimed books "Eastern Impressions" and "the Gladdening River" wrote "with the increase in time, the name of Kalimpong will be as much associated with the making of lace in Nottingham, Honitan or Brussels." ■

Gandhi Ashram

Story & Photos by
Barbara Grover

They live in cramped mud slab houses, without running water or electricity. Most cannot afford a pair of shoes. Until a few years ago, these children ate little more than a bowl of rice each day, had no idea what a violin was, and had no hopes for the future. Today, however, these six- to twelve-year-olds who come from some of India's poorest Himalayan villages make up the classical violin orchestra at the Jesuits' Gandhi Ashram school. And they are known for giving spellbinding performances.

The most significant performance the children have given so far took place last year before the German ambassador to India at Calcutta's prestigious Saturday Club—hundreds of miles from their home in Kalimpong, a northeastern Indian town near Nepal. As the ragtag orchestra played, the aristocratic crowd became true believers of what Jesuit Fr. Edward McGuire had been preaching for years: that music can be a weapon to fight poverty and illiteracy.

"Violin strings are the bootstraps that will pull these kids up," says McGuire, the Canadian founder of Gandhi Ashram. "This was the first time such a crowd had seen for themselves how playing music can empower even poor children intellectually and emotionally."

McGuire opened Gandhi Ashram Elementary School, a place that integrates rigorous violin instruction with an equally demanding academic curriculum, in 1993. He had entered the Society in 1949, spending his novitiate years in Guelph, Ontario. In 1954, a regent at the time, he traveled to Darjeeling, India, and has spent the majority of his many years in India in the field of education. He did serve as assistant to the novice master for a brief time, but in 1993 his provincial asked him to open Gandhi Ashram



In the first year, he recruited only 23 students. One of them was eight-year-old Sunita. There is no better example than she of what McGuire is trying to accomplish with his school.

Before enrolling in the ashram, Sunita spent her days toiling at another family's farm. Like her parents, she was illiterate and on the verge of malnutrition. But after a year at the school, she could read and write not just in her native Nepali but a bit in Hindi and English as well.



And she can play the violin with a determination and dignity that defies her frail body.

"I can't exactly say why, but everything is so different now because of my violin," Sunita explains. "Playing the violin makes me feel so good." As she meticulously places the instrument under her chin, her beautiful music seems even more extraordinary coming from a child who lives with

her parents and younger brother and sister in a two-room mud hut.

"I have watched Sunita grow through her music," says head violin instructor Rudi Mani. "As she became more self-assured with her violin, not only did her studies improve but she interacted more with other children."

McGuire hopes that as stories like Sunita's spread beyond Kalimpong—an area previously known only for its lavish Buddhist monasteries and Darjeeling tea plantations—his music theory will become a model for educators around the world. Indeed, more-affluent Western schools, many of which have discontinued music instruction as *frivolous*, could learn a thing or two from Gandhi Ashram.

Unlike India's public schools, which children cannot attend unless their family can afford school supplies and a uniform, the ashram is free. With only \$20,000 a year, raised mostly from individual donations from Switzerland and Canada, the ashram ("house of learning" in Hindi) employs five highly qualified teachers and provides each student with the use of a violin, all school supplies, and two meals a day.

Mealtimes are still a highlight of the school day for these children, who before enrolling in Gandhi Ashram couldn't fathom eating such wholesome, plentiful meals. McGuire believes that providing students with these meals is as essential as providing them with pencils for homework.

"If children are hungry, how can they be expected to concentrate on anything but filling their belly?" McGuire says, adding that without these meals, many of these children would suffer from malnutrition.

McGuire first came up with his music theory back in 1980, while working with demographically similar children at St. Robert's School in nearby Darjeeling. "I brought over Jogen Kahn, the conductor of the Calcutta Symphony, to give the students at St. Robert's some culture," McGuire says. "After watching them sit in perfect silence, I realized the remarkable effect music had on children."

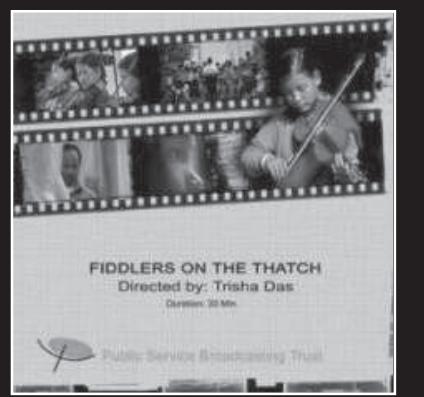


From Top
Father Edward McGuire, Students
studying in Gandhi Ashram, A
former student who is now in
Europe

After that day, McGuire hired a violin teacher and bought eight violins from Braganza and Company, a classical music store in Calcutta. Within three weeks of picking up violins for the first time, the St. Robert's students were playing classical music—and performing better in their studies.

Teachers at the ashram find the same results. "I was stunned by the students' learning curve. They were playing music that in England is given to students much older," says British music instructor William Morris, who volunteered at the ashram last year. "It was amazing how children who never played keyboard learned to play classical compositions," Morris adds, recalling that with electricity scarce in the area, the only way to get the keyboard to work is by running it on a car battery. Morris, like everyone affiliated with the ashram, believes it is a place like no other.

One only needs to enter the school auditorium to see why. Waves of children rush in, heading straight to the cupboard to grab a violin. A large group of children takes its place on stage to practice a concerto; others retreat to far corners of the room to practice individually. All at once, a magical cacophony fills the room, resonating hope for the future.



No matter what becomes of these children—whether they go on to higher education or return to work in their villages—classical music will have given them a dramatically different perspective on the world and themselves. It has opened their eyes to new ideas, so when they close them, they no longer dream of a hopeless future.

The school also has a reputation for academic excellence. Even the affluent, who could afford any school in the area, are trying to enroll their children in the ashram.

"If a kid doesn't have a protruding belly, sallow cheeks, a dirty neck, and no shoes, he is not considered for enrollment," McGuire says, adding that due to classroom overcrowding and a limited budget, enrollment must be limited to only the poorest of the poor.

McGuire hopes to expand the curriculum to include courses such as computer studies to better prepare the ashram's students for future jobs. He is well aware that not every child will master the violin, and among those who do, only a few will be able to make a living at it. The playing field, after all, is never even, McGuire admits. But unlike other children in the Kalimpong area, he is convinced that the ashram's graduates will grow up to be more sophisticated and better able to cope with the world.

"My goal is to find the natural ability in each child and encourage that ability to develop," McGuire says.

No matter what becomes of these children—whether they go on to higher education or return to work in their villages—classical music will have given them a dramatically different perspective on the world and themselves. It has opened their eyes to new ideas, so when they close them, they no longer dream of a hopeless future.



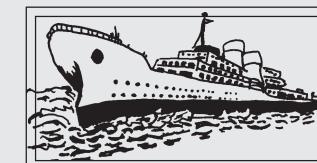
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PEDONG

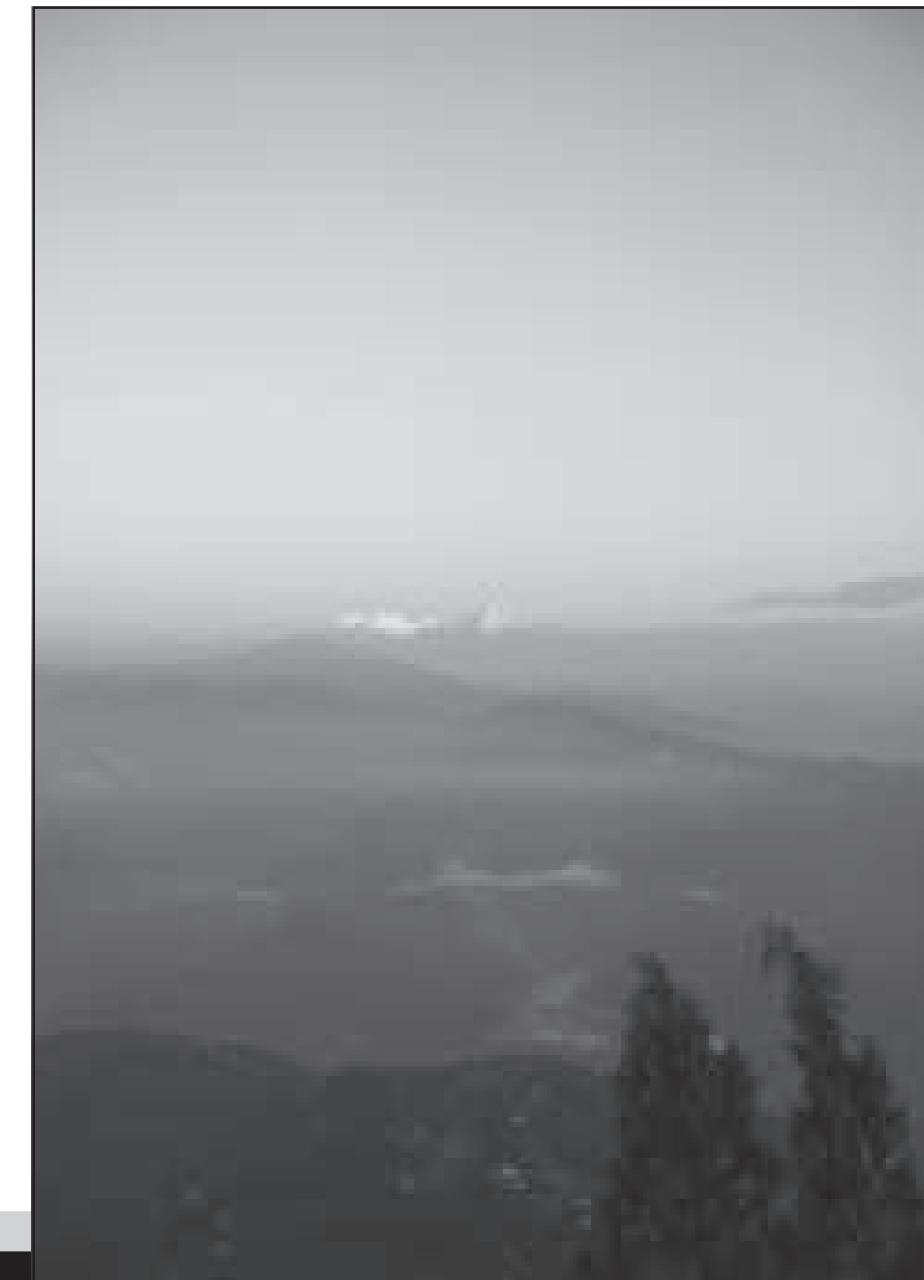
Pedong - meaning in Bhutanese dialect -a palace abounding in incense fir trees - is a consecrated name for its

inhabitants. Nestled placidly amidst lush green vegetation of the eastward sloping lap of the historic Darsang fort ridge, Pedong has as long a history of its unveiling as Kalimpong has to its credit.

The better-known history of Pedong dates back to the second half of the 19th century only when Kalimpong was integrated to the British Sikkim, i.e. Darjeeling hill tract, as a result of the Anglo-Bhutan war of 1864. With this region now being open and the new settlers, especially the Nepalese beginning to influx, a new society of the mixed communities of the native settlers, the Lepchas and the Bhutia's, was duly formed. In the fusion of the cultures of these three distinct tribes a new discernible cultural apt to be called a hill- culture has emerged. A compact culture is the especiality of the Darjeeling hills and for that matter of Pedong. Yet, peculiarly, each singular community manifests its own typical and distinct identity at times of its festive and cultural functions.

Today, some of the social function of the tribal people found favour with the heterogeneous population of these days. The religion-cultural dance "Chhyam" of the Bhutias, better known as Gurpa Dance in the local parlance, has been the annual feature at Pedong. It is held at Sangchen Dorjee Gurpa in honour of Guru Rimpoche Padma Sambhava on the tenth day of the second month of the Tibetan calendar. This is a three-day long festival of variegated programme which draws a large crowd of spectators from all the local communities most especially the Buddhist adherents of Dukpa Kagyu sect. Pedong is one of a few places where this gurpa dance is celebrated as a great festival.

An archery competition is annually held at Pedong as one of the great sports. The teams from as far as Sikkim and Bhutan seek contest in this shooting skill. Pedong, as such, has become a place where such a traditional game is highly esteemed and is still kept alive. It has been rather customary that the tribal



A CONSECRATED LAND

DR. DICK DEWAN



youths of this locality show enviable enthusiasm in organizing the archery competition at Pedong. These days even the non-tribal youths keenly participate in this popular game. With the sincere cooperation coming from the Army, garrisoned at Pedong with a Brigade base, the archery competition, usually held in December, January or February, meets with a great success.

In the recent years Lepchas, the so called earliest settlers of this region, having formed a committee to renovate and protect the Damsang fort, standing in ruins for over 135 years, have been celebrating the birth anniversary of their last king, the legendary hero Gaeboo Achyok, in the month of December every year. This and a great fair, Chaitey Mela, held in Ramnavami period for three days at the precinct of this historic fort, the main seat of Gaeboo Achyok's administration, have been great festivals for the inhabitants of Pedong and its neighbouring area who observe them customarily. Some of the precious relic salvaged from the ruins, after the fort was destroyed in the Anglo Bhutan war of 1864, are now found to have been preserved well in some monasteries of Pedong.

For the Nepalese population of Hindu faith Dasai (Dashera) the Durga puja and Tihar, the Deepavali, have been the major festivals which are celebrated with much merry-making. In the night of Deepavali, the auspicious time of Laxmi Puja, when rows of lights are lit, the groups of chelis (girls) called Bhailenis; visit the well decorated houses of the neighborhood singing special songs known as Bhailo. The Bhailenis go on singing this carol songs almost throughout the night when they invoke Laxmi Mata the goddess of wealth,

to reside permanently in the house they visit. The very there if their song is to wish good luck. They collect also some funds which they call dan. The following two days are then strictly reserved for the boys who from the group called Deusey khai. They play deusi at each door of their neighbours houses when the group leader narrates the purpose of their visit. Some very good narrators narrate rhythmically in rhyming words the age-old story of Ayodhya's Ramachandra's victory over Ravana, the boastful king of Lanka. This is the peculiar festive culture as elaborately observed by only the Nepalese community.

These and other minor social functions are all held in high esteem by the three communities sharing equally in the celebration. Pedong really serves as a fine sample for keen observers to find several communities of different ethnic origin living in perfect peace and harmony embracing for over a century, the same ethos. They have one common language, Nepali, to speak and they all speak it with a natural ease. English, Hindi, and Bengali are also spoken a little bit. Pedong has ever attraction the attention of the visitors and the reporters since long before. In West Bengal, it was Pedong which was selected as a model village for

a study by the census reporters who had brought out one voluminous monograph on upper Pedong, in 1966. In Major L.A. Waddell's book, *Among the Himalayas*, published in 1899, Pedong gets an elaborate description for its hospitality during his itinerary. A freelancer, Indira Awasty, could not resist her urge to write a book, entitled "Between Sikkim and Bhutan", 1978, solely about her impression of Pedong.

Pedong, far from madding crowd, happens to be situated close to the convergence of three borders of Sikkim, Bhutan and West Bengal. Lying in the lap of Tibet-China facing slope of the Damsang ridge Pedong liberally offers north-east vista of Aitar and Rachela hills at a further distance on the Tibet-China border catching the viewers eyes. Elevated at an altitude of about 4500 feet, Pedong itself presents with picturesque setting. Tinchuley, the three peaked hills, lying at a short trekking distance at a height of about 6000 ft. Could be as lovely as Deolo





Dara of Kalimpong but for its unkempt hair. The sight-seers very well enjoy feasting their eyes on the scene-sceneries of over that side. From any point on a long stretch of Kashyong basti road between Durpin dara and Kurus dara, one feels like touching Rhenock, the gateway of Sikkim. One can have a panoramic view of entire east and north Sikkim dotted with Rongli, Pakyong Bazar and Gangtok itself. Beyond Kalimpong it is Pedong which affords to be a name to be spelt out for a worthwhile visit.

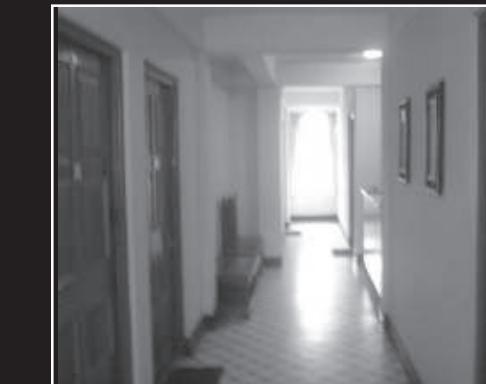
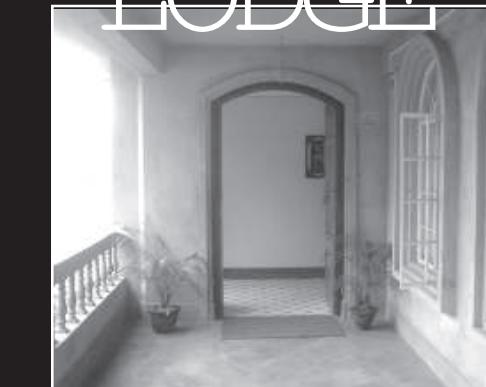
The interlocking hills and mountains of east Sikkim with rugged terrain, rivers and streams flowing down rapidly, the heavily forested valleys and deep gorges sharp-peaked mounts rather bare of vegetation, snow-capped peaks, some veiled in wandering clouds are among so many that the nature in this part of West Bengal presents in the form of lovely picture postcards. Pedong can really be at its best once in the spring with rhododendrons and magnolia in full bloom on the higher ridges; and once again in the autumn with golden paddy-field this side and over that side across Rishi and Mudum khola (rivulets). Weather in Pedong is fairly pleasant almost through-out the year. One does not feel the pain

of chill of cold like in Darjeeling unless the temperature sharply drops down at times during winter. In summer it is not unpleasantly hot.

There are, on the hill-tops, several such points from where one is thrilled to view the majestic Kanchanzonga just in front at an arm's stretch. Pedong can claim to have the most advantageous location to locate exactly where the famous Chhango (Tshango) lake is and where exactly the Chhunbi valley of Tibet is situated. The meandering border road passing through Rhenock, Rongli, Lintang, Phadamehen, Zuluk (9,400ft), Lungthung (12,783ft), Tukula, Gnathang-Kupuk (13,400ft), Jelep-la (the last Indian border post) and Nathula (14,400ft) present magnificent sights. This border road extending right from Pedong was constructed in the early sixties for the defence purpose, but upto certain points it is freely open to the civilians too.

Lying on the Indo-Tibet trade route, Pedong was the main station for the traders to halt and relax overnight or so. This route, mule track of stone, construction by the British in the 1870s, is still traceable at some places but invariably intersected by the long winding border road. It was along this route passed the laboring troops of the British army on an historic expedition to Tibet led by Younghusband in 1888. The graveyards of the soldiers killed in this expedition still exist to this day at Aritar, little above Rhenock bazaar and not far from Pedong. Talks are underway to open a trade-route to Tibet again. ■

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Now sits and fills the potholes
of her roads with water
And towards evening
This night-blind city
Emerges from these
very puddles

- Manprasad Subba
Varshama Darjeeling

When Subhas Ghising and his motley motorcade of diesel jangas drove into Mela Ground in 1986 to address a general meeting, very few people knew that Ghising was suffering from a severe cold: his weary eyes were watering and both his nostrils were firmly clogged from the long dusty drive across the district. After delivering a lengthy speech that painted a rosy vision of the future of these hills, he issued a call to the people to launch a mass movement called 'mato-ko-andolan'. Or so it sounded, at that time. Nobody suspected for a moment that actually Ghising was calling for a "bato-ko-andolan" - a struggle for the roads. And thus, thanks to the adenoidal vagaries of one man, the history of Kalimpong was changed forever.

It sounds incredible but it's true. Just pinch both your nostrils together firmly and try to say "bato" and if it doesn't sound like 'mato' then tell me. And if that's not enough, go for a walk, or better still, a drive around the rotten roads anywhere within the limits of our autonomous hill council and see for yourself.

But to resume my story: the well-meaning people of Kalimpong, quick to rise to the occasion, launched into an enthusiastic agitation for a separate homeland that began towards the middle of 1986 and lasted for three years; an agitation that was to provoke a sharp and brutal response from the Government of West Bengal: innocent civilians, many of them poor women, were mowed down in the streets by police gunfire in the infamous incident of the 27th of July 1986. Others found themselves dragged from their beds and locked up for months in various jails all over North Bengal. In one fearsome reprisal, the security forces massacred dozens of 'militants' (some of them ailing, elderly citizens) in the Gurba Hatta/Upper Dungra



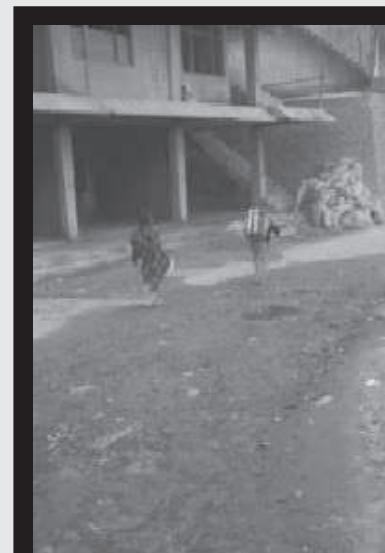
area. The Town Hall was commandeered by the Government and its basement rooms were turned into an interrogation cell with attached torture chambers where manacled and bleeding suspects were held.

With the signing of the 'Accord' in 1988, his purpose served, Ghising forgot all about Kalimpong. He was hardly seen this side of the Tista and if at all, it was peering out from the smoked glass window of a white Ambassador that rushed out of town before lunchtime, hot on the heels of a howling pilot jeep.

Ghising's face faded from public memory, people got on with their lives. The maimed dragged themselves around in improvised prosthetics, the arrested persons, who are to this day plagued with criminal cases from the andolan, hired their own lawyers to rescue them, the PWD rebuilt its razed bungalows, business drifted back in from Kathmandu and Siliguri and slowly Kalimpong limped back to a semblance of normalcy.

But it was back then in 1988, after the 'Accord', that the bato-ko-andolan took off in real earnest. It was a slow and insidious movement that took several monsoons to manifest itself. In the beginning, one could barely feel the bumps in the comfortable upholstery of the newly launched Maruti Omni vans but slowly and surely, Kalimpong's roads began to disintegrate.

Never mind, we said, our Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council is equal to the task. Ghising is going to fetch us pots of money from Calcutta and our streets will soon be paved with gold, just as he promised. But as the years rolled by, nothing of the sort happened. The roads just got worse and worse. The ruts became holes, the holes became potholes and the potholes themselves became trenches that filled with water during the rains. Never mind, we consoled ourselves, our Municipality is equal to the task. Somehow they're going to scrounge the funds from somewhere to repair the roads. But by



But it was back then in 1988, after the 'Accord', that the bato-ko-andolan took off in real earnest. It was a slow and insidious movement that took several monsoons to manifest itself. In the beginning, one could barely feel the bumps in the comfortable upholstery of the newly launched Maruti Omni vans but slowly and surely, Kalimpong's roads began to disintegrate

then it was too late: the GNL had turned its eyes on the Municipalities of Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong and before you could say 'Alkatra!' each of these towns found itself saddled with Municipal councillors of the diesel jonga variety. Side by side, delimitation redefined the boundaries of the Municipal areas, enlarging the maps to include large areas of agricultural land so that urban and rural concerns were hopelessly muddled up in the same civic body. The number of wards increased and so did the number of councillors. Everywhere not just the roads but civic infrastructure itself began to deteriorate rapidly. Main thoroughfares were no exception. Kalimpong's Main Road, Darjeeling's Judge Bazar and Ladenla Road, all turned into mule tracks that reminded one of the good old days of the Tibet trade.

In the meantime, party hoodlums received an open general license to occupy reserved roadside land. Not, as they would like to put it, because they were 'landless', but because these lands represented the very best of prime real estate that could be flogged off to unsuspecting buyers for lakhs of rupees. Witness the massive encroachment and transaction of PWD lands along Reshe Road towards the outskirts as an example. As usual, the local SDOs and the Assistant Engineers of the PWD did nothing about it, preferring to look the other way rather than rake up a row before one's transfer orders arrived. At any rate, the Collectorate itself was too busy apportioning the last of Kalimpong's public lands amongst its civil servants and petty bureaucrats to worry about such minor things. And so, as the traffic got heavier and heavier, the roads became narrower and narrower. It was a state of affairs that could, to this day, only be described as leng-feng.

But no, I remind myself. There were some desultory repairs actually made to the roads from time to time. But when? When the Dalai Lama came to town? When the elections were just around the corner? When the original paving from 1920 began to show up on Main Road and it just got too damn embarrassing? In one particularly pitiful instance, a contractor was saddled with the job of patching one of the smaller roads. The work was so shoddy that by the time the man reached one end of the road, the patchwork had already

been stripped away from the other. The outraged residents were contemplating the filing of a complaint with the Kalimpong Municipality against him. The outcome of which is still unknown. One wonders if their righteous anger would have been mitigated if the contractor had told them what he'd spent to get the contract.

And so the bato-ko-andolan drags on as roads are stripped bare of their surfaces, of the layers beneath and of the very boulders on which they had originally been laid. Every car becomes a rattletrap in a matter of days no matter how carefully one drives. Every conversation inside a vehicle turns to the appalling condition of the roads and ends with abuse for the ruling party. Every visitor to Kalimpong tells you what a nice place it is - except for the roads. The usual excuse put forward is the lack of funds. For a moment, let's assume that's true. Even so, the Municipalities could easily maintain a standby crew ready with a few barrels of alcatra and the (presently idle) road roller ready to patch the smallest rut on the street thus preventing it from becoming a pothole during the wet season. The biggest enemy of the road is water, for water enters the crevices of the road surface and destroys it, as any layman would tell you. The Municipalities could also easily clear the drains of all obstruction and keep them well maintained at a negligible cost. Strict bye-laws preventing the laying of water pipes over drains would go a long way in preserving our roads. The use of drains as a place for dumping garbage and waste water has also contributed to the destruction of our roads: a fine example of this is to be seen below the Government Housing colony where a perennial stream of black filthy waste is emptied not only onto the drain but often over the street itself. This notwithstanding that some of the most powerful (and supposedly responsible) officers of the Government are residing in the colony. The Sub-Divisional Officer, ensconced in his villa on the other side of the hill is of course hardly bothered by this. The water distribution networks needs to be regulated, redesigned and revamped in so that the digging of roads to lay pipelines is reduced. The major drains and jhoras leading out of town are required to be kept well maintained and free of obstruction. The use and disposal of plastic has to be reduced

by proper legislation and by the introduction of a garbage bin system in every shop and home. All this hardly requires funds; all that it really needs is for the Municipalities, the Government and the people to play a more proactive role, for the enforcement of existing regulations and a more efficient use of the present infrastructure.

But where is the will? After all, there is more money to be made out of destroying a road than from maintaining it. All of us have paid the price of the bato-ko-andolan either by a twisted ankle, a damaged car or even a fatal accident. But what are its profits? One will never know for sure, for the accounts of the Municipalities are shrouded in secrecy, even though the law obliges them to transparency and to an annual disclosure to its citizens. Under the indulgent eyes of a State Government that rules through a satrap, the accounts of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council are also kept under wraps and never questioned. What has been received for maintaining the roads, what has been spent, what has not, are questions to which there will be no answers so long as the State and Council are in cahoots with each other. The only purpose our roads serve today therefore, is as a monument to our inability to self-governance, to our weak and collaborating leaders, to our corrupt and self-serving brethren who prevent us from ever becoming a civic society.



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A good road is the first index of civilization. A road is the first point of physical contact between the citizens and the administration. Every time a man steps out of his house in Kalimpong, he curses his luck. The only

things that are new about our roads are the names that politicians give them. A man with patched trousers, no matter how ragged, always stands with dignity. And so it is with roads; we don't ask for new ones, even patched ones will do. And I'm afraid as things stand today in Kalimpong, the bum is showing.

Two evils on the warpath

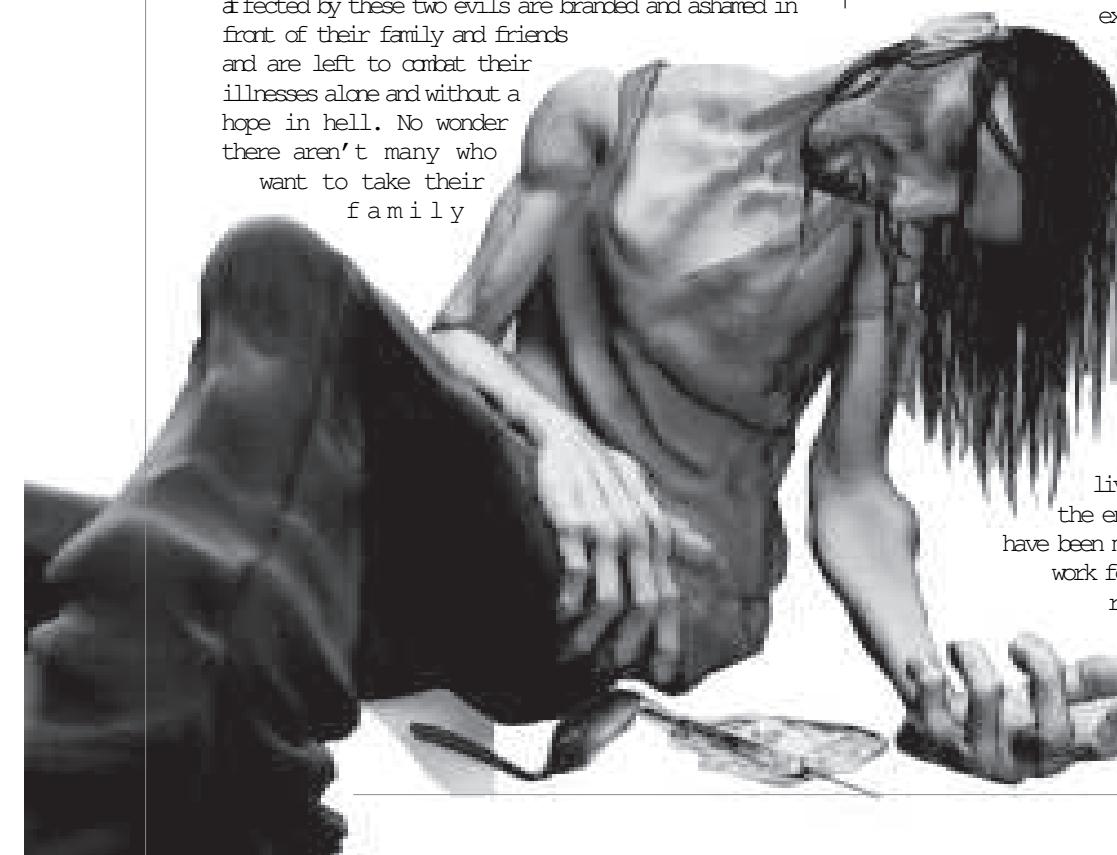
By Ville Saiku & Sandip C. Jain

It is not a coincidence that India is the second most HIV - AIDS infected country in the world and that the hill areas have been classified as a High HIV prevalent area, as reported in June 2006 issue of the Himalayan Times .Along with rising infection levels, a local Gangtok paper called NOW! wrote about the spread of drugs in the Darjeeling district, with Spasro Proxyvon, the prescription drug given to girls to ease their period pains becoming the party drug of the youth. It is unfortunate that these two evils, HIV - AIDS and drug abuse go hand-in-hand, one social taboo alongside another. Public denial of both is equally strong and ruthless and has not changed to consider lending a helping hand inside the community. Instead, the people affected by these two evils are branded and ashamed in front of their family and friends and are left to combat their illnesses alone and without a hope in hell. No wonder there aren't many who want to take their family

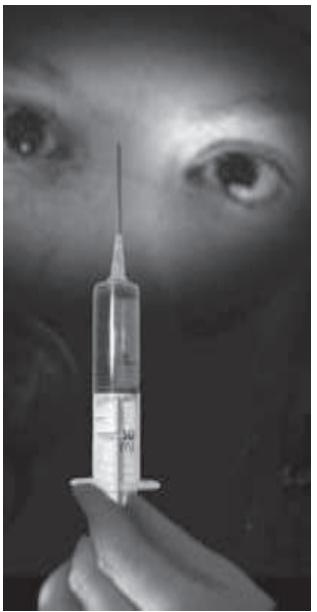
members to the help clinics, for rehab and counselling, or admit that someone inside their family is HIV positive, he or she is just prone all of a sudden to constant fever, nothing more. These problems run deep into the conservative heart of society and go against the prevalent outdated traditions, making the diseases nearly impossible to approach and leave the problems lingering without a proper solution.

India and risk factors

The United Nations has estimated that India with 40% of Asia's population has over 60% of the continent's HIV positive cases. UNAIDS is predicting that by the end of 2006 there will be 5, 7 million people living with HIV in India. Soon the example of the most HIV - infected country in the world, might change from South Africa to India, as India already is the second most infected country on earth and even a small increase in HIV infections could translate into very large numbers of people becoming infected. UNAIDS has outlined some risk factors that puts India in danger of experiencing a rampant spread of HIV if attitudes are not changed. The most unnerving factor is that unsafe sex and low condom use is wide spread. In the whole of India, a staggering 84% of all the reported HIV cases are due to unprotected sex. Such is the stigma of shame attached to buying a packet of condoms among the young that many lives could have been saved, if the availability, the encouragement and the price of condoms would have been more appropriate. The factor of migration for work for extended periods of time has only increased rather than declined in the past years. For long periods of time people are away from their social environment provided by their families and community and this can place them outside the usual normative



constraints. In such instances, being outside their own social environment might encourage them to take part in risky behaviour. Students studying away from home for many years also fall victim to the less constraint life away from families. A recent study has shown that drug addicts are shifting away from inhaling to injecting hard drugs. 41% of these drug abusers inject with used needles and syringes, which has put them and their sexual partners in the high risk group. Only a reported 3% of those who regularly reuse needles and syringes are using appropriate and effective methods such as alcohol, bleach or boiling water to clean their syringes. And lastly, the low status of women still plagues the Indian society. Unequal power relations, described by United Nations, as the limited access to human, financial and economic assets, weaken the ability of women to protect themselves. The Government of India's response has been to place more funds and efforts into combating the reduction of the



risk factors in the last decade, but major challenges still remain. The raising of the overall effectiveness of state-level programmes, increasing safe behaviour and reducing the stigma associated with HIV positive people and drug-addicts among the population, leave a lot to desire. But there is some light at the end of the tunnel, as co-operation of different NGOs run by socially conscious local people and international volunteers have shown a positive contribution to the fight against AIDS.

Misconceptions and hard-line education

Sexual education is not part of the curriculum of most schools in Kalimpong. Pounding some general information into the heads of hormone-charged youths is a prerequisite to assist in the changing of attitudes, as misconceptions of HIV and AIDS are common. Many people think that HIV can be transmitted through mosquitoes. This is not true, as when you are bitten by a mosquito, the mosquito does not inject blood of a previous victim, but quite happily pumps out your blood instead. HIV can be transmitted through oral sex, even though oral sex is a lower risk activity, but in receptive and insertive oral, it can be possible when there is contact between semen and the mouth membranes. Risk grows with frequency of activity. One cannot however become affected with HIV through casual contact with a HIV positive person. You cannot be infected by shaking someone's hand, by hugging or 'dry' kissing. Neither is it possible through using the same toilet, drinking from the same glass or by being exposed to coughing or sneezing by an HIV positive person. Finally, HIV and AIDS is not the same thing. HIV; Human Immunodeficiency Virus and AIDS; Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome is the collection of symptoms, diseases and infections associated

with an acquired deficiency of the immune system. While HIV is universally accepted as the underlying cause of AIDS, not all HIV positive individuals have AIDS as HIV can remain in a latent state for many years. Such misconceptions are killed by extensive awareness campaigns. In Finland the schools actively take part in eradicating misconceptions and educating the children about the dangers of drug-abuse and HIV. Nurses and doctors give lectures to students from 10-year-olds up until the youths graduate from school at the age of 19 on average. Pounding the information is crucial, even though many critics state that talking about sex and drugs only encourages the young to try these hot topics for themselves. No matter what the public opinion is concerning sexuality and drug experimenting, the children must be knowledgeable enough to know the consequences of their actions. So hitting home the message to the hormone-charged youngsters is important, and if showing graphic pictures and film-clips to scare children into refusing drugs and being careful during sex is considered brutal by some, however, it is highly necessary. Talking of sex and sexuality openly and explaining in detail, with the use of pictures, will hopefully form a lasting impression in the child's mind. Even the police and drug counsellors take actively part in the education of children. Giving lectures on drug-abuse, by describing cases involving youngsters like those sitting in the classroom listening, has a tremendous effect. Holding my first and last sample of heroin in my hands, listening to a list of horrible side-effects and the unimaginable withdrawal symptoms, with a policeman reminding me of the legal consequences of abusing such drugs, made a lasting impression on me. Years later, having the unexpected opportunity to meet a poor soul addicted to heroin, I was reminded of the lessons in school and having a pretty good picture in my mind of what sort of hell this man had ended up in. The meeting of a real junky was enough to scare me never to even hold a piece of that evil in my hands again. A situation, where youngsters might be offered and tempted to try a hard drug must be prevented by bashing the barriers of ignorance and shyness, by talking about them often and long enough. In this day and age of gigantic infection figures, hard measures must be taken, or otherwise the society will have to confront a landslide of new HIV infections and pay a high price for its stupidity and shyness. The example of Finland might sound a bit too harsh, but the co-operation of nurses, doctors, counsellors, police and NGOs works as an effective protective net and a similar approach might be considered here in Kalimpong as well. NGOs have started educating the school children, but there are not enough volunteers to reach every child in every school and due to small budgets, the lessons are given to classes only once.

The situation in Kalimpong

In Kalimpong since January, there have been five more new HIV positive cases. This brings the total number of people infected with HIV in the past five years to 25 lost souls.

According to the Superintendent of Kalimpong Sub-Division Hospital, Dr. Suva Ratna Pradhan, only in one of the cases, did a boy contract HIV by sharing infected needles, while others are due to promiscuous sexual habits. The infection ratio in most parts of the world is an even split between men and women and the figures from Dr. Pradhan indicate the same. But these figures are far from accurate, as the testing facilities in Kalimpong are non-existent. There is no testing centre in Kalimpong and the nearest and only voluntary free testing centre for the Darjeeling District is located in Darjeeling. No-one will reimburse you for the journey and your day is spent travelling and waiting in line for your test. Most people opt not to go. The Kalimpong Sub-Division Hospital does test some people, but they are very few and far between. If a doctor suspects the worst and after confirming his suspicions with a colleague, only then does the patient get tested. This is not a very common practise unfortunately as the hospital does not have the capacity or the funds to test every single suspected patient. But nevertheless the doctors have started to take action, even if the scale of the operation leaves much room for improvement. The free blood tests that the hospital provides are only reserved for the good Samaritans who willingly donate their blood to save others. The blood - donors are given a mandatory test to identify whether the blood is safe to give to patients. The test searches for signs of malaria, Hepatitis C and B, HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases in the blood. So unless you are willing to spare a few pints of blood or your doctor fears the worst, there is no other way to know for sure that you have a clean bill of health. In light of such circumstances and with such inadequate data, the number of infections in the town is impossible to know, but it is safe to assume that it is much higher than the 25 reported cases.

Drugs in Kalimpong

It is even harder to believe that only one case is due to drug abuse. According to Dr. Pradhan and the counsellors working for the newly formed Himalayan Anti AIDS and Narcotic Drugs Society, also known as HANDS, every other household in Kalimpong suffers from drug-abuse, whether it is in the form of alcohol, marijuana or harder drugs like Spasmo-Proxyvon. In the past 10 years, the chemical abuse of prescription drugs has become a major problem. Youngsters are the ones mostly in danger, due to reasons of peer-pressure, curiosity and the fashionable status drugs have acquired through heroes in the music and film business. Youngsters think that it is very 'cool' to try drugs. But no-one becomes a junky over night, or is born into the life of a drug addict. It is a gradual process, starting with cigarettes, alcohol, a few occasional joints to swallowing painkillers. It can be a gradual progression over a 10 year period, when the soft drug addict, no longer content with marijuana or alcohol, has to look for the 'high' in hard drugs such as brown sugar or Spasmo-Proxyvon.

Mr. Dipendra Subba, a counsellor working for HANDS, has seen many families destroyed by substance abuse.

'It's a rough estimate, but usually the people over 30 years of age battle an addiction with alcohol, while the under 30-year-olds are using drugs. The horrible thing is that there is no availability of disposable syringes and needles in the pharmacies, as the police made a point of stopping the issuing of disposable syringes and needles. Now the addicts share or re-use needles and syringes, which might cause a wave of new infections,' Mr. Subba worries.

He is right to worry, as Spasmo-Proxyvon, or SP, is more dangerous than brown sugar. It is also a prescription drug, which means that is legal, if you have a prescription that is. Most peddlers and users don't have one and all the police can do, is lock them up for a night and let them go in the morning. A case is started, with the police keeping an eye on the peddler, but there is no law as yet, which specifically covers down on SP peddlers. This fact drove the Gangtok paper NOW! to write a series of articles on the dangers of SP and demand something to be done about the problem. After a long battle of being at the receiving end of public criticism, the ruling Sikkim Democratic Front Party in 2004 promised a new law to deal with the peculiarities of abuse of the 'legal' drug of Spasmo-Proxyvon. In 2006 the Drug Addiction Act was passed, which gives the police the power of the law to deal with peddlers of SP. This law however is only for Sikkim and does not apply here in Kalimpong. What they care to realise in Gangtok was the awful truth about the drug. The drug is at its most lethal, when it is mixed with water or rum, then cooked and injected into the vein. If used extensively and for a long period of time, it can affect your central nervous system, as SP black-outs and sudden loss of consciousness can kill thousands of neural cells in your brain. The drug addict will eventually experience mental illnesses and suffer from emotional imbalance. The constant injecting can block the arteries and thus can cause heart attacks or even paralysis when the artery to the brain is blocked. The problem is that the tablet does not fully dissolve when it is mixed with water or rum and cooked, so sediments start slowly to build up and creates an abscess. The blood flow slowly but surely gets blocked and the limb starts to rot. Many SP addicts have lost limbs to gangrene. The definition of drug abuse, taught by HANDS, is when any chemical alters the mental or physical state of a person. Spasmo-Proxyvon users go through drastic changes and very visible changes in their behaviour. An addict's rhythm is co-ordinated by the drug, so he / she might start sleeping during the day and staying awake at night. The circle of friends, who are not addicts, will disappear to be replaced by people who are paranoid about conducting their affairs behind closed doors and through mysterious phone calls. Money starts to disappear along with some valuables from the house. He or she will lose interest in personal hygiene and appearance, becoming more withdrawn with sudden burst of anger or tears. Nothing and no-one seems to

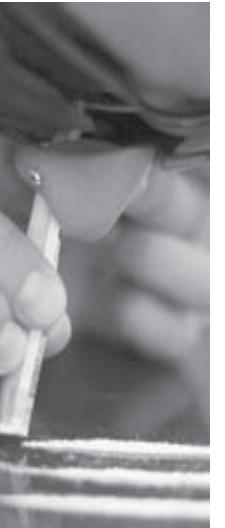


interest them anymore as the drug has taken hold of the mind and spirit and the only thing that matters is the next injection. A strip of ten tablets of SP can be bought easily for 100 INR on the black market here in Kalimpong.

H A N D S

One newly formed NGO, the Himalayan Anti AIDS & Narcotic Drugs Society, or better known as H A N D S, has begun to fight the evils of drug addiction and educating the masses on safe sex. This organisation was formed only a few months ago by a group of Kalimpong residents, who felt that action must be taken immediately. The ambitious people responsible for the organisation have big plans for the future, like setting up the first testing centre and a rehab centre for addicts in Kalimpong. At the moment, they are only plans, as the organisation is only funded by a handful of local people. More is needed so that these plans can be realised. The co-ordinator of H A N D S, Mrs. Zoramhmangaihi Vuile is already busy organising sex education and drug awareness classes in such schools like Rockvale Academy and St Joseph's Convent. These lectures given mostly to children approaching their teenage years are crucial, as at this age they are very vulnerable to peer-pressure. From a questionnaire on HIV/AIDS given to year 9 students of Rockvale Academy reveals that some misconceptions are still very much alive. Many thought that AIDS can be cured, if medical treatment is given at an early stage and that HIV positive people are easy to spot, as they are always skinny and look very sick. The most alarming fact was that many would not go to a clinic even if they felt that they had been infected with a sexually transmitted disease. The powerpoint presentation given to the students of Rockvale Academy explained in detail the difference between HIV and AIDS, the symptoms and how they are contracted. HIV and AIDS awareness was followed by a descriptive lecture on drug-abuse. The children, happy to be able to miss a class, listened intently at first, but such detailed subject matters produced a few yawns and bored faces. The people of H A N D S estimated that if 10 % of the children take something home from this one short class, their work has had purpose. It

is frustrating for people with such dedication and volunteer spirit, that they are unable to do more and teach the children regularly. Hopefully in the future, with more residents contributing to the good cause of H A N D S and their work, the energy and money coming from within the society will end up saving the society. The people of H A N D S have the right attitude, by not running away from the social taboos of drug-abuse and HIV infections, but by taking the bull by the horns and doing all they can, to teach, help and assist. It is time the society found out, for real, how bad a problem it is facing, because inadequate data brings nothing but false hope. The Principal of Rockvale Academy, Captain Pradhan urged the children to be brave and honest, when dealing with these issues, because one day you might end up saving your friend's life. So let's be brave and honest and confront these issues. ■



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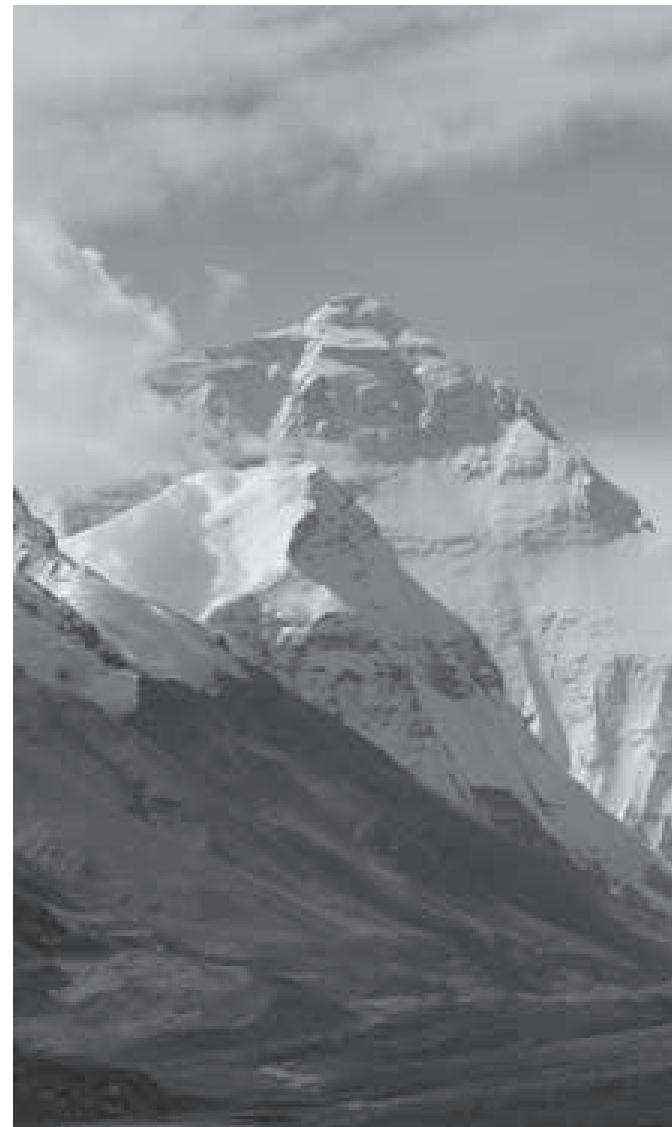
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We add some interesting details of the naming of the Deodhunga Mountain [Mt. Everest]: -

"On the 12th of May last two very interesting communications were read to the Royal Geographical Society of London upon Deodhunga, which mountain Colonel Waugh, in the first paper, refers to as 'higher than any other hitherto measured mountain in India, and most probably the highest in the whole world.' Colonel Waugh adds: -

"But here is a mountain, most probably the highest in the world, without any local name that we can discover, or whose native appellation, if it have any, will not very likely be ascertained before we are allowed to penetrate into Nepaul and to approach close to this stupendous snowy mass.

"The Colonel then proposes to name this noble peak of the Himalayas after his respected chief and predecessor in office (Col. George Everest) 'Mount Everest.'

"The second paper is a contribution from Mr. B.H. Hodgson, dated Darjeeling, Oct. 26, 1856, stating that although he agrees with Colonel Waugh as to the fitness of the name of Mount Everest, and sympathises with the sentiment which gave rise to it, he must add, in justice to the Nepalese and to himself, who has been so long connected with them, that the mountain in question does not lack a native and ascertained name; that the name is Deodhunga, Holy Hill, or Mons Sacer. To the paper styled 'Route from Kathmandu to Darjeeling,' there is appended a 'Memorandum relative to the Seven Cosis.' In the latter occurred the following words: - 'The Bhotia Cosi has its source at the Deodhunga, a vast Himalayan peak situated sixty to seventy miles east of Gosainthan, and which Colonel Waugh

DEODHUNGA

THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN THE WORLD



conjectures may rival Kunchenginga in height.' In the rude sketch map which accompanied the paper was set down the position indicated, and that that position tallies with the position of Mount Everest is clear from the words above quoted, since 'sixty to seventy miles west of Gosainthan' answers precisely to east longitude 87 deg., Gosainthan being in 86 deg. east longitude. Thus Deodhunga and Mount Everest are both about 100 miles N.E. of Kathmandu; both are midway between Gosainthan and Kangehan; and lastly, both are by their position and by the absence of any like mass of snow in all the intervals between those peaks, identifiable with the so-called Kutighat, or the Great Gate, which annually for half the year is closed by winter upon the eastern highway of Nepalese commerce and intercourse with Thibet and China. Round the shoulder of Deodhunga runs, as above intimated, the great eastern highway (the western being round the shoulder of Goasainthan) of the merchants and envoys of Nepaul proceeding to Lassa and Pekin; and this passage along the shoulder of the huge snowy mass of Deodhunga is denominated the Kutighat by the Hindoos and the people of the plains of India, as the passage round the huge snowy mass of Gosainthan is denominated by them the Kerung or Western Ghat.

"After the reading of Mr. Hodgson's paper to the meeting, the President said he was sure all who were present would be delighted if this mountain should for ever retain the name of the distinguished

"Having determined that of all the mountains whence the affluents of the Ganges run, the loftiest summit is situated about midway along the Himalayan chain, and finding that this culminating point (N. lat. 27 deg. 56 min., E. long. 86 deg. 53 min.) was 29,002 English feet above the sea, and consequently 846 feet loftier than the famous Kunchenginga of Nepaul, Colonel W augh has gratefully and appropriately named this, the highest known elevation in the world, Mount Everest, after his valued geographical instructor."



geographer who, following Lambton in the great trigonometrical survey of India, had been the means of carrying on that magnificent operation, which had been conducted to a conclusion by Colonel W augh. A more appropriate name could not be given than that of Mount Everest; and, whatever might be its name in India, he hoped, in England at least, it would always be known by the name Everest. - Mr. Prinsep, F.R.G.S., said it was known that the Himalaya range

extended many degrees in length, and that in the whole course of it there were mountains of varying heights. Some of them were the highest in the world. Those which had been really measured overhung the plains of India, and until recently it was supposed that the highest were near the source of the Ganges. Since then, however, the discovery had been made that there was a mountain

28,000 feet high; and the present discovery showed another in Thibet, within the sight of the territory of Nepaul, 29,000 feet high.

"When we came to measure the mountains in which the rivers of China rose we should perhaps find some of them 30,000 feet high. - Colonel Everest then paid a merited tribute to the eminent public services of Col. W augh, and acknowledged that the compliment paid to him (Major Everest) by proposing that the mountain should bear his name. Yet, he added, there were objections to this naming which did not strike everybody. One was that his name was not pronounceable by a native of India.

an accurate and intimate knowledge of a part of the globe most interesting to mankind at large, and of vital importance to Great Britain in particular.

"After detailing the survey, the President of the society, Sir Roderick Impey Murchinson, added: -

"Having determined that of all the mountains whence the affluents of the Ganges run, the loftiest summit is situated about midway along the Himalayan chain, and finding that this culminating point (N. lat. 27 deg. 56 min., E. long. 86 deg. 53 min.) was 29,002 English feet above the sea, and consequently 846 feet loftier than the famous Kunchenginga



The name could not be written in either Persian or Hindoo, and the natives could not pronounce it. It would be confounded with that of O'Brien, and the hill people would probably call this mountain Ob'ron. As another instance of the difficulty which the natives experienced in pronouncing English names, he might, among others, mention that the name of the 'Hon. Mr. Cavendish' was pronounced by them 'Humbel go mundee.'

"We have much pleasure in adding that, at the recent anniversary meeting of the Geographical Society, the Victoria or Patron's Gold Medal was presented to Colonel W augh - "For his valuable and able extensions of the great trigonometrical survey of India, and particularly for his recent triangulation carried on through Rajputana, the Punjab, and the Himalayan Mountains, thereby adding to our geography

of Nepaul, Colonel W augh has gratefully and appropriately named this, the highest known elevation in the world, Mount Everest, after his valued geographical instructor. These great results appear to come peculiarly within the scope of the society, which takes for its motto 'Ob Terras Reclusas;' for eight years ago the mere exploration of the tracts in question would have been deemed impracticable; whereas, under the direction of our medallist, a vast portion of these countries is now accurately delineated, on the basis of astronomical observations, connected by the highest appliances of modern geodetical science and art.

"The President then addressed Colonel Everest, and handed to him the medal, requesting him to convey it to Colonel W augh; to which Colonel Everest appropriately replied on behalf of his esteemed successor in office." □

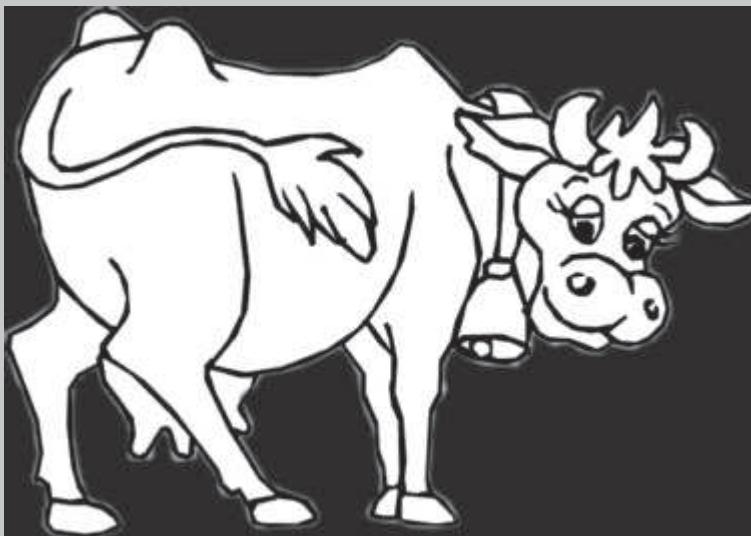
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HOLY COW

THE FOLLOWING ESSAY WAS WRITTEN BY A CANDIDATE APPEARING FOR HIS UNION PUBLIC SERVICE EXAMINATION (UPSC). THE TELEGRAPH NEWSPAPER GOT HOLD OF THIS ESSAY AND THIS WAS LATER PUBLISHED IN THE DECCAN CHRONICLE ON THE 9TH OF AUGUST 1992. THE TOPIC OF THE ESSAY WAS "THE INDIAN COW:



So hear goes the essay and please remember that Himalayan Times hold no responsibilities if your stomach bursts open while laughing!!!!!!

"The cow is a successful animal. Also he is quadruped, and because he is female, he give milk, but will do so he is got child. He is same as God, sacred to Hindus and useful to man. But he has four legs together. Two are forward and two are afterwards."

"His whole body can be utilized for use. More so the milk. What can it do? Various ghee, cream, curd, why the condensed milk and so forth. Also he is useful to cobbler, watermans and mankind generally."

"His motion is slow only because he is of asitudinous species. Also his other motion is much useful to trees, plants as well as making flat cakes in hand and drying in sun. Cow is the only animal that extricates his feedings after eating. Then afterwards, she chews with his teeth who are situated in the inside of his mouth. He is incessantly in the meadows in the grass."

"His only attacking and defending organ is the horn, specially so when he is got child. This is done by knowing his head whereby he causes the weapon to be parallel to the ground of the earth and instantly proceed with great velocity forward."

"He has got tail also, but not like similar animal. It has hair on the other end of the other side. This is done to frighten away the flies alight on the his body whereupon he gives hit with it." "This is the cow"!!!!

BELIEVE IT OR NOT BUT THIS CANDIDATE PASSED HIS UPSC EXAMINATION AND NOW MUST BE SOME HIGH RANKING OFFICER IN SOME PART OF THE COUNTRY...HOLY COW!!!!!!!

Old timers of the town recall with much pride and nostalgia the times when Kalimpong was a breeding ground for footballing talent not just in the region but in the entire state of Bengal where names like Chakray or Mini or Chamba or Mumtaz or Rannay, to name a few, were spoken of with a degree of awe and were synonymous with football in the region. Now in the time of Bhaichung Bhutia, from an obscure village in Sikkim, who is ruling the football scene in India and is setting the trend for all aspiring professional footballers of the country to follow, it is a matter of grave concern to neighboring Kalimpong, once of the Thomas Mukhia and Ganga Karki fame, that today it does not even have one footballer in the town whose name can claim instant recognition even in the town itself, let alone in North Bengal or elsewhere.

Where are the new Chakrayas or Olas or Dhendups that one would have expected to emerge from a town that has had such an illustrious footballing history???? Why is there a void in the emergence of new talent on the football pitch after the heroes of the past have hung up their boots???? Is there a genuine lack of talent or is there a lack of proper training or lack of application by the current crop of the town's footballers???? Or is there any other reason for the sudden drop in the standard of football being played in the town???

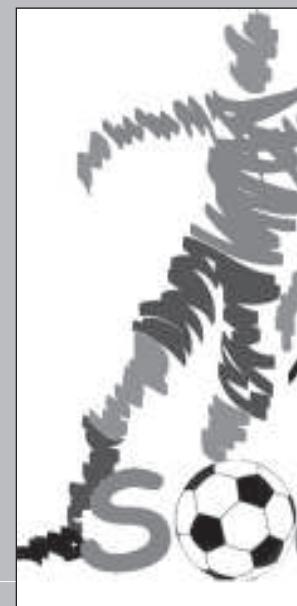
Says a concerned Mr. R.B. Gurung, former coach of the very successful St Augustine's School football team and who himself was a much accomplished footballer of the 1950's having played for several famous teams of that decade like the Army XI, Kalimpong Town Club XI and the Maitri Sanga- "the primary reason for the absence of outstanding players in Kalimpong today is that even in this age of TV right and sports sponsorship, local talent is not really cared for and nurtured and young footballers prefer to spend more time and effort in looking for more conventional career opportunities rather than sharpening their skill on the football field." He goes on to point out that in the 1960's and 1970's good local talents were absorbed into service by the Police and Civil authorities and these footballers continued to exhibit their skills playing for highly successful teams like the D.C. XI or the Police XI without any fear for their livelihood after their playing days were over.

Mr. Narayan Bhujel, an old-timer of Bong Busty, who being a hard-core football buff has seen all the talent coming out from Mela ground ever since the 1950's has this to say "talent like Thomas Mukhia, Kaluk Bhutia and Mini will probably never again come out from Kalimpong until and unless qualified coaches guide the local talent because modern football has now become a very technical game and to succeed in today's competitive world of football, the technical aspect of the game must be taught to the players at a very young age."

Will Kalimpong ever be able to once again come out with football legends like Sunil Prakash, who played for the Mohun Bagan from 1975 to 1977 or Shyam Lama who played for the same club or Urgen Lama (Mini) who donned the Mohammedan Sporting Colours??? Will Kalimpong ever again throw up teams like the one which held the Mohun Bagan to a 2-2 draw when the Calcutta giants came to play a friendly game at Kalimpong in the year 1953??? Will entertainers like Kira Kancha, Mumtaz Ahmed, Nim Tshering, Appa Tshering, Gaulan Lepcha, Aditya Rai, Anil Pradhan, Paufa, Baby, Narayan Rai, Jeewan, Raju Rai, Baddruddin or even Pittalay ever again enthral crowds at Mela Ground???? ■



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C H A K R A Y S , M I N I S
R A N A Y S & C H A M B A S
G O N E ? ? ?



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By Sandip C. Jain



6th anniversary
issue

The Queen of England, a Silver Smith

Rs. 1000 and a piece of land called

Kalimpong

By Bhanu Baral

In times when a decimal of land in Kalimpong can cost anything between Rs.80000.00 to Rs. 2,50,000.00, what would you accept as a gift - Rs.1000.00 or the entire area that is today known as Kalimpong???? Karbir Sunar accepted Rs.1000.00 !!! Shocked are you?? Read on, this is a true story of a man who accepted thousand rupees instead of Kalimpong....

"Narayan Daju ", I cried out. Having seen me at the Naseem Stores, he sauntered towards where

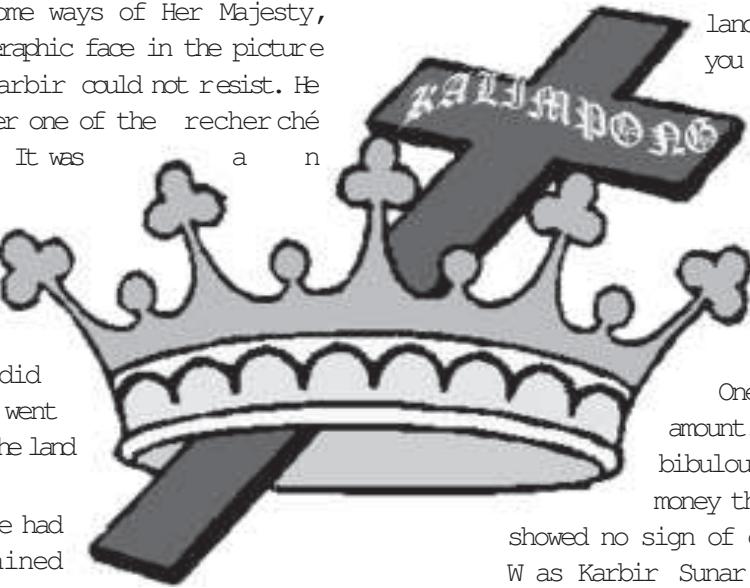


I was standing. I had been talking to my friend, Iqbal, about the subject matter in question. "Do you have any information on the Sunar, Karbir of Kalimpong"?? He paused for a while and chuckled, "Are you referring to the Silversmith of the bygone days of Kalimpong"?? I answered in the affirmative. I had gone through a book "History of Darjeeling and Sikkim Himalayas" written by K.C.Bhanja, the first edition of which was brought out in the early twenties of the twentieth century. I had gone through the text several times and was fascinated- Karbir Sunar of Kalimpong was a person to be remembered for the

posternity. Its my quotidian experience meeting Narayan Daju (of Lal Galli) during my morning walks. I was sure Narayan Daju was one of a distant relatives of Karbir. But he was not forthcoming.

I had read, Karbir Sunar of Kalimpong was enchanted by the winsome ways of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria. Her seraphic face in the picture was something which Karbir could not resist. He thought, why not send her one of the recherché items for Her Majesty. It was a n arduous task for Karbir to prepare a Silver jar with decorations to match with, as a rare gift to Her Majesty. He did prepare the Jar, which went ashore to the capital of the land where the sun never set.

Karbir was impatient, he had sent the gift which remained unacknowledged for several months. And then one fine morning, a masseuses, a mandian of Her majesty accompanied by half a dozen of his subordinates visited Karbir with the offer, " I am representing Her Majesty Queen Victoria, who is extremely pleased to receive your gift." Karbir was excited and blurted out, "Did she really get the gift??" The answer of the masseuses was in the affirmative.



"Her Majesty is extremely pleased to receive the rarest of gifts and she has sent this letter for you.". One of the persons was engaged in doing the Nepali translation, "Her majesty the Queen Victoria is extremely pleased to receive your gift. Let the entire land of Kalimpong be gifted to you and should you fail to accept this offer let you be awarded a sum of Rs. One thousand."

Karbir pondered over the text of the letter which was read out to him and eventually accepted the second offer - a sum of Rs.

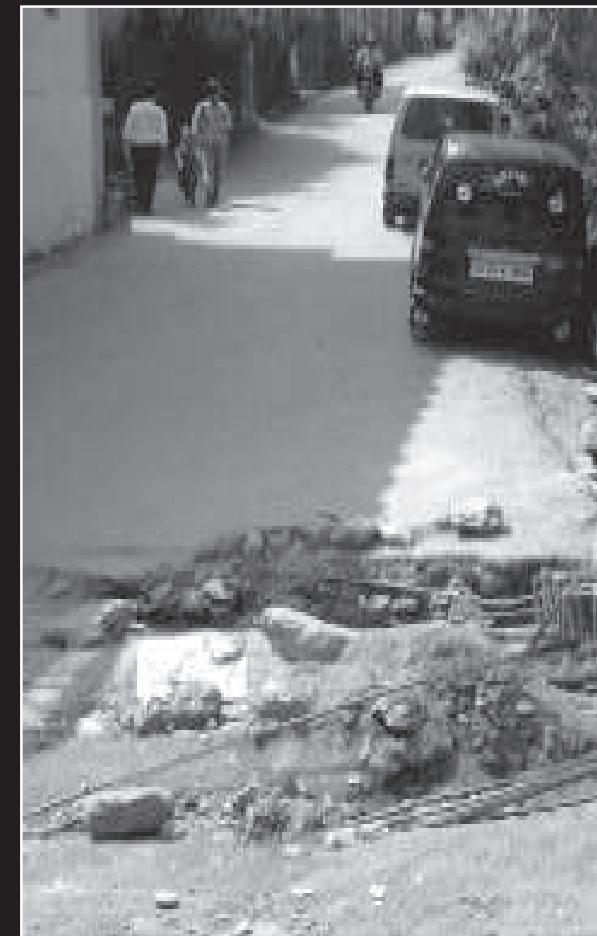
One thousand. He was paid the amount. He could not get over his bibulous habit and spent all the money that he received. Still then he showed no sign of compunction.

Was Karbir Sunar's simplicity and innocence that made him accept the petty sum of Rs. One thousand over the entire landed area of Kalimpong??? Or was it his greed for liquid cash which made him decide against becoming the owner of Kalimpong?? The mystery will remain for ever but one thing is certain - his decision saved beautiful Kalimpong from probably being "Karbipong".

The Editor & the entire team of Himalayan Times wishes to thank all its Readers, Advertisers and Agents for their invaluable support, cooperation and suggestions since its republication six years back. We assure them that Himalayan Times will continue to bring to them the finest English writings in the Hills of Darjeeling for many many more years to come

Where have all the drains gone?

Wg. Cdr. Praful Rao



Some statistics/facts about Kalimpong subdivision...

- a) Average annual rainfall is 2500-3000mm ie approx 80-85inches.
- b) Unprecedented and widespread deforestation has taken place in this area in the past 20yrs.
- c) Also during this period we have witnessed an explosive increase in construction of buildings with scant regard to soil structure and almost no urban planning.
- d) Last but not least, Kalimpong is located in seismic zone IV
(Definition of Zone IV: This zone is second in severity to Zone V. This is referred here as High Damage Risk Zone.)

We happen to be in an area which receives some of the heaviest rainfall in the world. Come June each year, the South Westerly monsoon literally explodes over our heads dumping approx 7-8feet of water per square inch; so picture this a lake as large as the subdivision with 8feet of water...that's what the monsoon creates. Yes, the water does not stagnate but that's exactly where things go wrong..here are some related questions and answers...

- a) Has any study been done on how to channelize the water from this huge lake so as to minimize the damage to our infrastructures and land forms.
- a) Ans: No (most probably)
- b) Have any major new drains been constructed to cater for vast new urban/ built up areas which have come up in the last 20-25yrs?
- b) Ans: No. The drains we have today are very much those which the British left us with half a century ago.
- c) What is the condition of the existing drainage systems which are in place?
- c) Ans: In many cases, they are defunct and where they are functioning, the condition of the drains is pathetic. To elaborate further, in Kalimpong town most storm water drains now conveniently serve as conduits for huge bundles of domestic water pipelines which choke the drains. Then, of course there is the gigantic problem of plastic waste which clog up nearly all our jhoras and drains.
- d) Is there any organized/systematic effort to clean the drains before the monsoons?
- d) Ans: Periodic and regular cleaning of the drains is seldom undertaken.

So we have millions of tonnes of water gushing down these fragile mountains every which way it wants and the most obvious victim are the roads which it ploughs up more efficiently than a bulldozer.

No wonder our roads look like what the Apollo astronauts saw on the moon!

Potholed roads may not kill, but what will is the fact that this colossal amount of rainfall now cascades down virtually barren hillsides where once stood magnificent forests. Thousands of acres of trees have disappeared in the last 20yrs or so and with them the ability of the land to withstand the monsoons without sliding.

And so... we taunt nature and ask for an encore of the 1968 disaster....

As regards the last para ie the seismicity of Kalimpong, I have only to quote a far more illustrious person viz H.E Gopalkrishna Gandhi, The Governor of West Bengal

SPEECH OF SHRI GOPALKRISHNA GANDHI, THE GOVERNOR OF WEST BENGAL, AT THE FIRST CONVOCATION OF BENGAL ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE UNIVERSITY, SHIBPUR, HOWRAH, ON 16 FEBRUARY, 2005.

An important part of India is Himalayan, including the area comprising the state of West Bengal. The Himalaya are a mountain range which, for all its celebration in our legends and epics, is geologically young. Like everything young, it is unpredictable. The Himalaya are susceptible to the most devastating geo-hazards. I fear we have not realized this sufficiently. Today, if a quake at 8 on the Richter were to visit us, the great majority of the region would not only be mauled but, for days, could remain unreachable by rescue and relief teams. The roads going up may well get fissured and fragmented, landslide and building crashing down approach routes. I suggest that BESU and NBU do a joint study and make projections, on likely impact on the region of geohazards in terms of spread, extent, intensity of impact, reaction time, and recommend action.

Bye and sleep well... if you can.....

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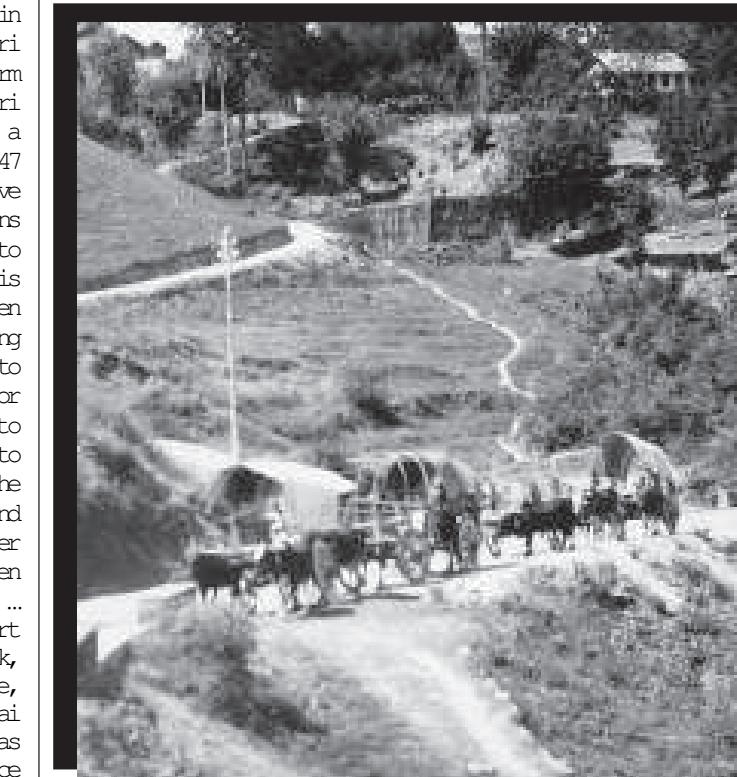


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All Kalimpong residents are aware that Kalimpong was once a major station in one of the busiest caravanserais in Asia. In fact Sir Charles Bell is on record having said: "The most important of all trade routes between India and Tibet takes off from Kalimpong in the district of Darjeeling, crosses South-Eastern Sikkim and enters the Churboi Valley by the Jelep La. ... Half of the entire trade between Tibet and India traverses the Ihasa-Kalimpong route." Expectedly, it was the shrewd Marwari businessmen that blazed the new trail, nurtured it to maturity and eventually took it to dizzy heights. It is written that, "With the establishment of the British Raj in Sikkim, the Marwaris began to expand their trading centers not only in Darjeeling and Sikkim but also in faraway Tibet. For example, Sriram Mulchand of Kalimpong and Ramachandra Mintri Gangtok began to supply all the food provision and necessary stores to the British Political Office at Gangtok and Tibet, as the Political Office was in charge of Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet affairs. Ramachandra Mintri acted as the Banker for the Political Office at Gangtok and his firm was known as Chhotu Bank..." I have written above that the Marwari businessmen took the Tibet- India trade to dizzy heights and as a corroboration I produce two extracts. The first one written in 1947 runs as follows: "Over a lakh mounds of wool (3,846 tons) arrive annually in Kalimpong on caravans of mules conducted by Tibetans and in addition about 19,000 mounds are carted from Gangtok to Kalimpong. Practically none of the wool is consumed locally; it is all sorted and baled in warehouses in Kalimpong bazaar and then exported to the plains. Formerly Kalimpong was only a receiving center and all the wool received was dispatched in its original state to Calcutta for Liverpool. Sorting and baling in Kalimpong ready for shipment was encouraged by the entry of American merchants into the market. Since 1930 Kalimpong baleurs have shipped directly to America." The above text refers to the early and mid 1940s but the trade actually peaked in the 1950s and for that we go to the second extract. "Money poured in, the daily turnover in the busy winter months being estimated at Rs 40 million. ... More than 10,000 men were employed in sorting out mounds of ... wool from Tibet ... Thousands more provided fodder and maize for the mules ... Apart from wool and KMT silver, the caravans brought Yak's tails, Musk, Borax, Curios, and Chinese rice. They took back cement, kerosene, all the manufactures of Indian factories, and even a car for the Dalai Lama that was dismantled and carted up piece by piece." Trade was terrific and the writer Spencer Chapman noted, "Last year the price for wool at Kalimpong was five pence per pound; this year it is eleven.." It was in a way just too good to last, wasn't it! ■

Mountaineering amongst the Nepalis is generally thought to be the domain of the Sherpas but it was the non-Sherpas that pioneered this sport. Long before A.M. Kellas (Everest Expedition 1907) first introduced the Sherpas to mountaineering in the Sikkim Himalaya the non-Sherpa Nepalis were not just climbing but doing exceedingly well as mountaineers. They had already explored and climbed peaks in the North-West Frontier, Karakoram and Western Himalaya with Charles Bruce, Francis Younghusband and Lord Conway. With the latter in 1894 Amar Singh Thapa and Karbir Burathoki traversed the Alps covering 1,600 km in 86 days and in doing so crossed 39 passes and 21 peaks. In Switzerland they ascended a virgin peak of 3,063 metres at the head of Valpingta that was named Piz Gorkha and a col on the nearby Catscharauls ridge was named Gorkha Pass. They later climbed in Wales and Scottish highlands where it is claimed that they climbed a Skye peak in record time. When the first major Himalayan ascent was accomplished in 1907 on Trisul Peak (7,120m) Karbir Burathoki was one of the summiters along with Tom Longstaff. The Sherpas had just commenced then as professional mountain porters. Non-Sherpa Nepalis were also involved in the Everest expeditions of 1921, 1922, 1924, 1933 and 1947 but before they could set records a new frontier was already beckoning them and the call of war drums was too powerful to resist. This almost proved to be the true calling of these stout highlanders and VCs and Military Crosses came in a flood. But as if to prove a point that the non-Sherpa Nepali could still climb, in 1973 a 17-year-old Sambhu Tamang scaled Everest setting the record for the youngest Everest topper at that time. ■

The Best from Dr. S.B. Wangyel



Jennifer Fox, a daughter of a Darjeeling Tea planter, who taught in the Homes for a few years in the 60s and is a keen historian of the region recalled Kalimpong in the following way: "Described by some as the prettiest hill station in the Darjeeling District and possibly in India, Kalimpong is as different from Darjeeling as chalk is from cheese.

Never a resort for the Calcutta fashionable, it was able to develop its own identity as an international hill town attracting peoples from all over the world. I learned to love this town where all the tribes and religions of Asia meet." Much before Jennifer was born another European, passing through Kalimpong, on his way to Tibet wrote: "Kalimpong is a beautiful place; it overlooks the valley of the Teesta, and is within easy reach of it: it has the hum, life and interest in the movement of things inseparable from a town on a great highway." However, I think the best description of Kalimpong came from the

Nelsons who used to bring tourists from the USA to the town. Unlike the archetypal tours of the Indian plainsmen the Nelsons took the tourists to the 10th Mile area and the Yankees watched in amazement small factories making incense sticks, the Tibetan thangka painters coating their canvas with vegetable colours, the noodle factories and many of the tourists were richer and happier especially after purchasing souvenirs the favourite being the colorful sarba or the Tibetan boots that had no left or right sides to them.

Anyway this is how the Nelsons saw Kalimpong: "The scarlet poinsettias stretch upwards as tall as trees, bamboo frame and earth plastered houses with ochre thatched roofs bid a warm welcome, orchids grow on roadside trees and geraniums in vibrant shades grace humble courtyards." After having stayed in for sometime this is how they felt: "When you travel there are some scenes that are forever etched on your memory; places to be called up when, in the midst of 20th century busy worlds, there is hunger for a simpler life. Kalimpong is one of those scenes ." ■

Many words that describe different professions come to us from distant lands and despite having Nepali alternatives for most of them we depend on the foreign substitutes. Can you ever, in the normal course of a conversation, think of substituting 'sir' for a schoolteacher with 'adhyapak', 'upadesak', 'talmayju', 'guruji', 'panditji', 'gurudev', 'dikshak', 'pathak' etc. it is not just difficult but nigh impossible. Just the other day I was reading a book by Professor Ramlal Adhikari, Head of the Nepali Department, Government College, Darjeeling, and in one six and a third page essay, Asankhya Santanka Fatherka Deshbatta, he had used over fifty English words. English is that pervasive and excluding some exceptional cases there is little point in trying to examine English words in the Nepali language. Consequently, we will not dissect English words or terms like doctor, professor, pilot, engineer, nurse, hero, receptionist, manager, superintendent, lifeguard, contractor, compounder, night guard, bearer and the likes for they are all familiar to us and we will scour words that are spicier, more zesty and from outside the colonial influence. And in this case it is people with the less envied professions that give us the scope and the satisfaction with some terms worthy of investigation. What comes to my mind immediately is the word 'durwan'. It is jokingly said that India and Britain took so many of the able-bodied Nepalis, to fight and defend their lands, that they were able to form eleven Gurkha Regiments and in anger Nepali felt that they might as well take the rest. So the 12th Gurkha Regiment, the 'durwans' defend the properties of the affluent in the Indian cities. The word is Persian pronounced variously as 'darwan' or 'darbar' meaning a doorkeeper. What amazes me is that we have our options in the form of 'dhokay', 'dwaray', 'dwarpal' and 'dwar-rakchak' and yet....another Persian word in our language is 'mehtar', the sweeper and scavenger, which is an offshoot of 'mihtar'. The Persians occasionally resorted to infuse a bit of irony in their words denoting humbler professions and so 'mihtar' also means a great dignitary or a prince. Similarly, the domestic tailor was called 'califa' or a vice-regent. The roots to the terms 'nokar' and 'chakar' for servants are also Persian. We normally call a single servant 'nokar' and a group of servants 'nokar-chakar' and considering the Persian meaning we are almost correct. Almost? Yes, because there is a subtle difference in that the Persians call a superior servant e.g. the accountant, the valet, the private tutor, the personal attendant etc. a 'nokar' and the menial workers like the dishwasher, stable groom, the sweeper etc. a 'chakar' and when suggesting the whole group the term 'nokar-chakar' was used. While referring to a goldsmith we are fond of the word 'sunar' but another term, 'sarafee' is also used to denote this profession, although Parasmani's dictionary makes the latter to be, more specifically, a dealer of gold and silver in the sense of a banker and not necessarily a goldsmith. The parent word in this case is the Arabic 'ashrafee' meaning noble and the word was used to mean a gold coin in contrast to the less noble silver or bronze coins. The Arabs have also given us the word 'saees' adapted from the English 'syc' which was originally 'sais' meanings a groom for horses or a stableman. While 'saees' retained its original Arabic meaning, 'Khalasi', the Arab tent pitcher, became an assistant to a taxi/truck driver. The word 'raj-mistri' is a curious one for there is nothing royal (raj) about his job. The word 'mistri' is a deviation of the Portuguese 'mestre' implying a foreman or a master-craftsman and to this was added the Persian 'rae' denoting a mason or a brick-layer. Finally, let us scan that despised but ever so useful 'coolie'. The exact etymology is uncertain but there are pointers that it originally referred to a tribe, Koli, that lived in western India and were hired to do non-skilled works like carrying mud, bricks, wood etc. later the name became a term to designate a profession. What makes it difficult to come to definite conclusion is the fact that in Tamil they have a word 'kuli' suggesting hire or wages. Furthermore in the Turkish we also have 'kol' denoting a slave and surprisingly the Tibetan pejorative prefix 'khol-' also signifies a slave (kholan, a slave; kholpo a male slave; kholmo a female slave). ■

If Rev. Dr Grahams is to be given the honour for developing modern Kalimpong then Rev. W illiam Macfarlane, without doubt, must be given credit as the man who pioneered the development of what was once a slumbering village. Macfarlane's major undertaking was towards developing education in the hills and he championed the cause so successfully that, in the field of his work, there is no equal in the district's history. However, the task was not undemanding, as the following extract will reveal: Rev.W . Macfarlane started the mission work in 1875. The area he chose for his work, (about) his residence, found the nucleus for the present Kalimpong town. The school, the boy's school he started in the building adjacent to his residence later on became the first school building, housing the Girl's school. ... Rev. W . Macfarlane had to face real opposition from parents and guardians when he tried to start girl' education. Girls of the family were to serve the family; they were to help the family in bringing up the little ones, to look after the house while the parents went to work for their livelihood. Rev. Macfarlane met opposition even from the tea planters, who did not like the idea of being deprived of the cheap labour of the young girls. Hence it took more than a decade after the light of education started in Kalimpong for the inception of Kalimpong Girl's High School to take place. Lal Kothi Girls' Hostel which is a wing of the Kalimpong Girls' High School was opened in 1913 to provide accommodation for trainee teachers who were enrolled in the newly opened training School for Mistresses, also an integral part of Kalimpong Girl's High School. ..At first there would appear to been six rooms accommodating five girls in each room but it must soon have been extended as the records show that sixty two girls were in residence in June, 1917. ..Modern sanitary arrangements were introduced in 1927 and electricity was installed in the study hall in 1928. Electric lighting had been extended to all rooms of the hostel by 1970 but that does not mean that storm lanterns and kerosene lamps are things of the past .Our erratic electric supply means that they have to be kept always at the ready.

The Catholic Missionaries had a rough deal when it came to building school(s) in the town area. The Scottish Mission took the area as their domain and resisted all attempts to allow others to grow in the area. The St.Joseph's Convent for girls and toddler boys was the only concession in the vicinity of the town and the repeated proposals from the Catholics to open a boys' school were always turned down. Then in a stroke of genius the Convent nuns employed a clever ploy by requesting the administration to allow a priest, which they claimed was absolutely necessary, to be in attendance at the Convent. Father Stolke was consequently appointed to the post and he secretly began to coach boys in his bedroom and at times in a garage. This one -roomed 'school' eventually became St Augustine's School. " The tiny seed was planted by Fr .Stolke in 1941,when he undertook two tutor a few Convent boys in Latin, thus preparing them for admission in North Point. Father Stolke was soon found holding ,in his own bedroom, classes of 12-15 boys ranging from Kinder garten to Matriculation and Senior Cambridge . Then the threat of Japanese bombardment over Calcutta induced various parents to evacuate their children to the hills and some of these care to swell the ranks of the nascent school."

The Best from Dr. S.B. Wangyel



The district headquarters may be on the other side of the Tista but Kalimpong has been in many ways the political capital of the district .The GNLF's inspiration may have come from elsewhere but the spark that metamorphed it into a movement came from Kalimpong. The Gorkha League that held political sway over the district for decades was very much a child of Kalimpong. Whether it was the homespun politics or the presence of loftier political faces Kalimpong was always abuzz.Nari Rustomji taking us back to the 1950s and referring to Jigme Dorji, the first Prime Minister of Bhutan, commented , "Jigme was schooled in India and had opportunities of meeting a wide variety of people, as Kalimpong was in those days a center of attraction for foreigners interested in political, ethnical , botanical and other branches of Himalaya research ." The famous writer Sunnada Datta-Ray elaborates: " Nehru had called Kalimpong a nest of spies.Chinese Communists saw it as the command center of British imperialism. ... Kalimpong was once the world's pot-pourri. ... The thirteenth Dalai Lama had found asylum there.So had relatives of the deposed King Theebaw of Burma.Elderly Afghan Princes who had fled Kabul with King Amanullah could still be seen in the weekly market . Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark and his wife,Princes Irene ,were said to be studying Himalayan flora(correction:polyandry and witchcraft)... Sir Tashi's sister , Pani Chuni , had retired to Bhutan House, a Tatar prince brought memories of the court of St. Petersburg. A neglected villa was pointed out as having once been Rabindranath Tagore's home .In another house had lived the Hungarian (correction:Russian) painter Svetoslav Roerich and his Bengali actress wife, Devika Rani.Some residents had no known Denis Conan Doyle , the son of the creator of Sherlock Holmes. ..Emissaries from Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet used to gather their long before Kalimpong became Britished territory in 1865." More recently Kazi Lhendup Dorji and Kazini Elisa-Maria Langford-Rae Dorji found Kalimpong eminently suited to push forward their political ambition .I quote : "As her (Kazi Elisa) entry into Sikkim had been banned by the Chogyal , she operated from Kalimpong , a sub-divisional headquarters of Darjeeling district in India . ..her house in Kalimpong became the operational headquarters for the movement launched in April 1973. All major decisions and important meetings of the Joint Action Committee would take place there."



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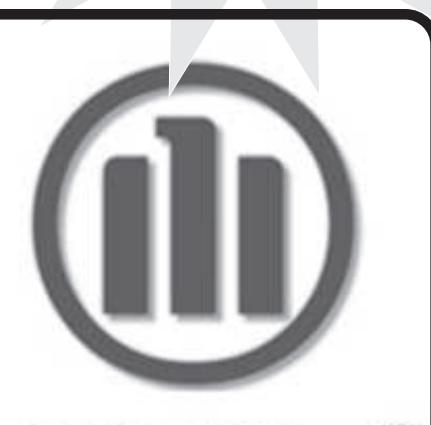
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Kasto Mazza Hai Rail Lai Ma..... English Style

By Priyanka Sharma

What does someone in Britain do when he feels like sipping "chai" sitting on the window of our Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) at Sukna? He creates a Sukna and takes the Toy Train there.

For a handful of British steam fanatics, it is as simple as this. Long distance and heavy expenditure coming in the way of frequent travel to India, the Brits have found this rather amusing way of bonding with the DHR.

It was in the summer of 2005 when they first gave shape to the "expansive thought"—they blare it on the Indian beer—that first came to their mind when they were aboard the DHR during one of their trips. Paul Lewin, general manager of harbour station of Ffestiniog Railway, had—reportedly, after the third pint of beer—exclaimed: "What the heck! Take Minffordd station complete and turn it into Sukna!". Not surprisingly, members of Darjeeling Himalayan Railway Society, a UK-based organization, were simply quick to grab the idea.

They had the Minfford station of Ffestiniog, a narrow-gauge steam railway of Wales, turned into our very own Sukna station. True to any Indian railway station, it had signs in Hindi and English and bazaar selling Indian tidbits; with gorasahibs, dressed in shawmis and kurta-pyjamas, selling chai and samosas. In 2006, Sukna was "recreated" ditto at Bedfordshire of the Leighton Buzzard Railway, another narrow-gauge steam railway in Wales.

And last August, the third reincarnation of Sukna took place at the Fairbourne station of Fairbourne Railway (FR), also in Wales. This time with a difference: the DHR was in its half-size replica.

FR is a miniature railway in Wales with tracks laid on a gauge of approximately 1ft. The DHR runs on narrow gauge, which is 2ft wide. Most locomotives of the Fairbourne Railway are half-size replicas of engines running on famous narrow-gauge railways. Sherpa, the DHR-replica locomotive is the only non-British one.

"It was a veritable riot of colours," David Barrie, chairman of DRS said. "The weather was great and everyone had a lot of fun; we raised over £200 for charitable projects at Darjeeling and the ticket revenue broke almost all records."

Organised over the two-day "Bank Holiday Weekend" from August 26, DHR-fanatics in UK had converted the Fairbourne station into Sukna station, complete with railway signs (in both Hindi and English), prayer flags, Indian bazaar and DHR members dressed in Indian attires not just vending "chai", but also polishing shoes. Sherpa, decorated with wreaths of saipatri (marigold) also offered special joy-rides to enthusiasts. Besides, there were special curry meals and DHR shows.

Signs like "photography prohibited"—complete with spelling mistakes that are so common in India—rendered authenticity to the setting. Then there were signboards saying "Hurry Hurry Spoils the Curry", "Donate blood in the blood bank and not on the roads" and "better be late Mr Motorist than the Late Mr Motorist", which are straight from the warnings that line the steep and winding National Highway 55 between Siliguri and Siliguri.



Is it possible to think of India and not talk of Bollywood? To render the masala complete was Bollywood actor Mayur, famous child actor known his roles of child Amitabh Bachchan in hits like *Mugdar ka Sikandar* and *Sharabi*. He is settled with his family in Wales at present and all had turned up at the event. Several other Indian families also attended the meet.

Barrie said the event was the second-most popular event in the UK's history of steam fanaticism so far. "The Sunday of the two-day event was the second busiest day in the railway's history (Fairbourne railway), only missing out on the top spot by £400," Barrie, who is the chairman of both DHRS and Fairbourne Railway Society, said.

"The most popular event was 'Thomas the Tank Engine' event when the engines wear faces just like the engines in the books," Barrie added.

Not just fun and more popularity for the DHR, the event had a higher cause too. "We were raising money for a number of causes—the Fairbourne Railway so they can upgrade the accommodation where the volunteers who work on the line as a hobby can stay, the Royal National Lifeboat Association who go out to save lives on stormy seas and the DHR for a number of reasons. The DHR and FR supporters made around £200 each and the RNLA's collection was about £350," Barrie said.

The Darjeeling Railway Community Support, charity sub-committee of the DHRS, would use the money for charity work for communities residing along the DHR tracks.

No wonder then that the Indian Railways have recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the DHRS for furthering the interests of the DHR!

This is not the end for the DHR lovers as, like every time, the event concluded with a promise of a repeat performance.



All this leaves us with a simple question to answer in the end: When they can do so much from so far away, why can't we do something for our own sanu rail living right here? ■

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nce a potpourri of flourishing trade and hub of secret agents from Britain, Tibet, China, India, America's CIA and probably other countries, Kalimpong seems today a mere worn-out town where every one is only catching up on their lives.

"After Tibet lost its independence (in 1959), Kalimpong's importance also diminished. There was no more trade between Tibet and India under Tibet's new ruler, and it (Kalimpong) was no more of any political significance," says 76-year-old Phurbu Dhondup, an elderly Tibetan living in the town. It was then the Tibetans brought wool to India, while on return they carried all kinds of household goods you name it, you have it.

It was here that the first Tibetan newspaper was born. "The Tibet Mirror Press; Established 1925", reads the sign board on the crumbling tinned house, near the 10th Milestone (doesn't exist now though) on Giri road.

Albeit the first Tibetan-language newspaper, called "Ladakh ki Akbar" (Ladakh's Newspaper), was published in 1904 by a Moravian missionary in Ladakh, the Tibet Mirror was truly the first Tibetan newspaper for its content and its mission: to educate the Tibetans.

Tharchin, the editor and publisher of the paper, made much effort to report on affairs of the world, to educate Tibetans and to encourage the opening up of Tibet to the changing modern world. He reported and commented on the imminent dangers of the approaching Chinese invasion.

Prof. Dawa Norbu later stated, "It is no exaggeration to say that if the ruling classes in Lhasa and New Delhi had heeded what Tharchin Babu was saying, Tibet's modern fate might have been different."

Yulchog Sosoi Sargyur Melong (Mirror of News from All Sides of the World) was the original Tibetan name of the Tibet Mirror. The first issue of the newspaper came out in October 1925. The issues came out at irregular intervals.

The newspaper chronicled an important era of Tibetan history including the looming communist Chinese invasion of Tibet, and started a new wave of literary activism in Tibet often pitting the conservatives against the reformists of that era.

"It was my grandfather who did all the work of the newspaper. He selected the news from the newspapers he subscribed to and translated them for the paper," David Tharchin, grandson of Tharchin, explained from what he knew about his grandfather.

Of the fifty initial copies, most were sent to his friends in Lhasa, including one to the 13th Dalai Lama. The 13th Dalai Lama became an ardent reader of the paper and encouraged Tharchin to continue with the publication, at least to educate him about the changing outside world. The current 14th Dalai Lama inherited the subscription of the late 13th.

However, the paper came to an end in 1962, and Tharchin died in 1976. "My grandfather was getting too old to continue the paper, and my father was not interested in it," David recalled.

Tharchin Babu's only son, Sherab Gyamtsho Tharchin passed away on the 5th of this month at the age of 70 after a brief illness with lung complications. He was survived by his wife and seven children. David Tharchin, the second son, provided all the information about Tharchin Babu.



The Tibet Mirror

THE FIRST TIBETAN NEWS PAPER
NOW ONLY A MEMORY





The Tibet Mirror

THE FIRST TIBETAN NEWS PAPER
NOW ONLY A MEMORY



Tharchin was a Khunu native in Himachal Pradesh, born in Poo village in 1890. His full name was Gergan Dorje Tsering Tharchin, and he later came to be known as Khunu Tharchin Babu by Tibetans. He was baptised as a Christian by Moravian missionaries in the region, but retained his Tibetan name.

Tibetans from outside.

"We know we (people from Kalimpong, Darjeeling and Gangtok) are called 'To ro mo ro' (for 'broken Tibetan with Nepali accent') by other Tibetans, but our quest for a free Tibet maybe is stronger than theirs," says Ola, a youth.

"We do not have political events here but we actively participate when a call comes from Dharamsala," Ola added.

There are 10 monasteries in Kalimpong. One of them—Tharpa Choeling (also Samten Choeling in Darjeeling)—is known to be propitiating Shugden. □

6th
anniversary
issue

A few paragraphs in this piece will not do any justice to tell about mighty Tharchin Babu. A work in two volumes has been published on the life and times of this formidable personality by the author Herbert Louis Fader. The books are directly available from his family home in Kalimpong. Contact: David Tharchin. Email: david_65in@yahoo.com

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The story of Tharchin Babu, a journalist and pastor, does not stop with the Tibet Mirror. He, along with his second wife, Margaret Tharchin, had also started an orphanage in 1962. Today there are about 40 children in the children's home. The home has a budget request also.

Today, there are about 2700 Tibetans living in Kalimpong, including five Tibetan clusters whose jurisdiction falls under the Kalimpong Tibetan Welfare Office.

There are two schools for Tibetans. People's main livelihood is from their various businesses including hotels and restaurants. They also make noodles, incense, phing (glass noodle) and traditional Tibetan boots, which are exported all over

Tibetan settlements in India.

Nepali is the chief language of almost all the Tibetan youngsters here. Tibetan is not spoken and in many cases Tibetan is already an alien language for them. They prefer to use Hindi or English to converse with

The New Year's Day heralding 1958 was a memorable one for all those who attended the party hosted by the Edwards near the junction of Hooker Road and the Lebong Cart Road where they used to live. The living room was gaily decorated with streamers, balloons, pompons, confetti and blinking lights. It was party full of music, laughter, singing, dances, and lots of goodies to munch throughout the evening but no wine. It didn't matter being young we were high without the assistance of any fermented juice. Amber Gurung displayed his keyboard skills and compositions on the harmonium, Kapil Raj played the violin like an extension of his own body, I merrily strummed the guitar with the latest Elvis and Chuck Berry numbers. We all danced the Bhagwandas steps on C. Ramchandra's combination Rumba-Samba tune of 'Gorey-gorey'. Amber Gurung's group song 'Ritu Ramailo' in Samba was a hit. We were all young, I was the Mile and Half Mile champion of North Point School and College and Half-mile champion (civil) of the District, for me the atmosphere was electric. Life in those days was so much joy, fun and unconditional love among friends. At the stroke of mid-night we greeted each other and shook hands as the New Year dawned. I also shook hands with a beautiful young girl for the first time and it was a great feeling. It lasts for life; strangely I never met her again. We sang many songs deep into the night and after a delicious and sumptuous meal we bid goodbye to our kind hosts happy and elated.

I lived at Ninki-danra and I had to cover a distance of about three kilometers from Mr. Edward's place. Darjeeling had a large number of ghosts in the 50's. There were quite

Happy New Year 1958

— By Nayan Subba



a few on the stretch near the old cemetery, same on the Lochnagar road when early one Sunday morning in 1876 a lightening struck a Sapper's arsenal which exploded and killed the entire guard. One extremely tall guy was often seen near the public toilet on the eastern side of Municipal building 'K'. An illustrious 'Khaini de bhoot', a ghost who demanded khaini (chewing tobacco) moved around Bokshi jhora (Witch's stream). Taxi drivers

plying late on this route invariably carried khaini; it had to be thrown outside to appease the tormentor. The most feared one operated just below the Basanti Annex on the Hill Cart road. It was the 'Come hither ghost' which mesmerized people into a stupefying trance. Amber and Kapil wanted to escort me at up to Maryville but in a spurt of bravado I waived their offer and proceeded alone. It must have been 1.30 am when I reached Victoria Jhora Bridge (Saraswati immersion ghat); the night seemed to intensify as great waves of alto cumulus clouds spread across the sky. Winter had set in and there was chill in the air. In 1958 there was no habitation from the stretch between Mr. C.B. Pradhan's house at Kakjhora right up to Maryville where Mr. Gagan Gurung a well-known music composer lives. Halfway between is the Basanti Annex a hospital just above the road. As I proceeded something deep inside began to waver, it was perhaps a deep primal fear of the unknown. As I went past the Burdwan gate road crossing the silence was so deafening I could hear the echo of my leather heeled sole on the railway tracks going Ping! Ping! Ping! Deep down in the valley dogs were barking which penetrated the air. I could hear the thumps of my heartbeats growing louder and going out of control. I called in all available strength and courage and sang a song on my guitar to boost up my morale. I was never so nervous before. In such a situation no amount of education and courage will help to eradicate ghosts and superstition. For no perceptible reason I suddenly stopped singing. I glanced ahead, a strange sixth sense instinct warned me that there was an alien presence; the road was full of dappled shadows, far off around the bend I catch a faint reverent just near the junction of the Basanti Annex road crossing. I said to myself, "This is it, my worst fears have come true, I've met a ghost!" It was incredible, I was petrified, breathing hard, I couldn't believe it, it was a trance like situation! The standards of bravery and courage are pretty high among hill men but when it comes to a ghost or a specter I am afraid the ratings are abysmally low. I couldn't turn tail and flee towards town for I had no where to go, so I took the primitive way of dealing with

adversaries, throw stones. Throw stones I did with all gusto towards the apparition. The shadow stepped back in alacrity and shouted Hey! Hey! Stop throwing stones, it's me! It's me! I was immensely relieved. I looked hard and saw the figure of a man, I moved towards him. He was a lean man with deep-set eyes and crow's feet, a thin nose with some peculiarities and an indescribable look of scorn in his face. He mildly chided me for walking at such an unearthly hour and to be careful not to hurt others by throwing stones. I apologized and left the scene greatly assuaged, I went past the "Come hither" ghost point without any incident. The "Come hither" spectre had once spooked Mr. Gagan Gurung who was traumatized and taken ill for two months. It could have been a hallucination but he doesn't tell lies. I reached Maryville where a dog bared its fangs on me, I walked quickly but one thing kept striking me, the man whom I had met went down the steps of Ihsa Villa softly and silently like a butterfly, it didn't seem real! I reached home at last only to receive a thorough dressing down from my granddad which still rings in my ears and made me forget everything. No hard feelings, he was a good man and it was a case of genuine concern, no cell phones like today.

Darjeeling in 1958 was lots of smiles and greetings, the mountains could be seen from everywhere, people could go to the market without locking up their doors, the Police marched smartly for the change of guards in the Town beats, public toilets were clean, tap water was potable, teachers and elders were well respected and by 6 PM the streets were empty. One could talk on the phone line for a long time even if there was a cross



connection. The Independence Day Parade was held at the Bazaar square. Austin A 40s (Devon), Studebakers, Fords, Chevrolets, Opels and Hubers could be seen at the Club side Motors. The old colonial hang over had not quite gone, the beautiful Christmas air and New years bash were regular features. The revelry of Dassain and Tihar, the sound of madals and Damphus (folk

instruments), Nepali Folksongs and Marigolds, Roti ping (Ferries wheel) and Lingay pings (giant swings) and glorious inebriations warmed the cockles of the heart. Gorgeously dressed Tibetan ladies singing in high pentatonic scales in Losar, the Miharmu celebrations, horse racing in Lebong, football, hockey, momos and Chang were all a part of the composite culture in Darjeeling. Since Darjeeling was still the 'The Queen of hill stations' one never felt better in taking a walk around the Mall with gusts of wind saughing silently through the tall pine trees, the sight of mountains, the nymphs and Pan softly playing his flute over the trees specially for those who were in love and wearing the rose of youth in them.

A week later after my encounter with the man that night I saw the same person coming towards me near Deochand's shop below the Bazaar Post Office. I greeted him with the traditional Darjeeling half salute and I profusely apologized again for my rash act that night. I couldn't have mistaken him for another man, he had the same thin nose, same scorn on his face and the same peculiarities but strangely he pleaded ignorance about the incident, looked quite sincere and said that no such a thing had ever happened to him. He shrugged and took departure. So was it a sprite, ghost, spirit, elf, spirit, demon or a disembodied soul? Or was it a mischievous adventure of the fair kind?

Have you any suggestions? ■

Articles, Poems, Short Essays, Old Photos and Sketches on the Darjeeling Hills are invited for publication in Himalayan Times. They may be sent to -

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